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"The whole world without Art would be one great wilderness."

WATTEAU

BY

JOHN W. MOLLETT, B.A.

OFFICIER DE L'INSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE, FRANCE,
AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF WILKIE,"
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INTRODUCTION.

WATTEAU'S WORK AND POSITION IN THE HISTORY OF ART.

FONTENELLE has a fanciful theory that the inspiration of art and letters is acted upon like a barometer by the weather.

> "The eighteenth century," he says, "was distinguished with a mild sun and laughing sky, and earth covered in roses. France was a universal garden rich with the sweetest and most enervating perfumes. Then were born two delicate children destined to give spirit and colour to their age; they were Voltaire and Watteau, the representative poet and painter of the eighteenth century."

In the same spirit M. Arsène Houssaye speaks of the parallelism of art and letters.

> "Poussin, Le Sueur, Champaigne, and Le Brun are a good pendant to Corneille, Molière, Boileau, and Racine. La Fontaine has no pendant, he was himself poet and painter. In the eighteenth century grandeur and simplicity meet. Voltaire, who is only poet by the lightness of his grace, was born at the same time as Watteau, with the same fire of genius, the same caprice. Marivaux, Gentil-Bernard, Crébillon-le-gai, and Boufflers are contemporaries of Van Loo, Boucher, La Tour, and Fragonard. Later on Greuze and Florian appear together; then David and Prud'hon contend nobly with Marie-Joseph Chenier and André Chenier, and thus painting and poetry advanced hand in hand in France."

Those who regard Watteau from the point of view of the subject matter of his art, who class him together with the feeblest of his unworthy imitators, who are impressed rather with the charms of the fairyland that he invented than with the solid artistic merits of his work, call Watteau a purely French painter, and the founder of a school of French painting isolated from the great stream of modern art, and peculiar to the eighteenth century, or rather to the era of the Regency. But the subject of his compositions, full of poetry and charm as they are, is insignificant by the side of their artistic merit.

> "If painting consists, not in the expression of tragedies upon canvas, but in inventing with poetic feeling, and impressing by colour, Watteau is the greatest of French painters. None has surpassed him in his love of Nature and his feeling for the ideal. He creates an immense and infinite Nature, which he envelopes in a luminous atmosphere" (*Th. de Banville*).

Others, judging by his later works, in which his colouring approaches to that of the Venetians, call him a disciple of Paolo Veronese. But he only studied the works of this master late in life, when his taste was already formed. A more influential school of critics, whose verdict is confirmed by modern opinion, classify him with the Flemish painters, and the study of his history has shown that it was undoubtedly from the works of Rubens that the most important art impressions of his early life were derived.

> "At the Manchester Exhibition," says M. Bürger, "the *Amusements Champêtres* of Watteau are close to the *Rainbow* of Rubens, and the two pictures harmonize well. The tone of the landscape, the sky, the rays of the setting sun among the foliage, the delicious flesh tints of the women seated on the sward in robes of iridescent colours, have all the quality of Rubens. Watteau is French in tendence and genius, and in style he is of the Flemish frontier-land, and in execution and colour he is a disciple of Rubens. *It is not far from Valenciennes to Antwerp.*"

Combining all verdicts and criticisms, we perceive that beyond

and above the seductions of Watteau's fanciful poetry, and the naïve charms of his composition, we are to look for his higher claim to immortality in the same quality that makes beautiful the coarse interiors of Teniers, Brouwer, and Van Ostade, and sets Rembrandt on his pinnacle of fame—

> "The treatment of LIGHT—the soul of painting—which, modified in intensity and in direction by each object that it falls upon, plays from one to the other like a rebounding ball, absorbed by some bodies, reflected by others, passing through the diaphanous, half penetrating in the down of a peach, or the froth of a vessel of beer, in the silky hair of a spaniel or the curls of a girl; scattering abroad on its way all colours in infinite gradation; now blotted in broad patches, now split into a thousand rays each of which has its destiny as they separate, meet, and mingle like the waves of a moving sea; brilliant at every angle, gliding softly round all curves, in the corners of furniture, in the wrinkles of a face; here and there brightly reflected on the eyes, or on metals, or on the polish of marble or mirror, or deadened on the surface of a porous vase, or changed by clouds, by vapour, or by smoke; varying at every rent or stain of a rag, or resplendent in the irid shades and reflections of a velvet or satin; mingling with the colour of every part an echo of the parts that are near it, and from change to change passing on to the end of this long Odyssey; and, ready to die or escape from the picture, showing on the last object that it illuminates the traces of all the modifications it has passed through, all combined and mingled as the old man's wrinkles show the traces of the great emotions of his life" (*Léon Dumont*).

The reader should compare with the above the remarks of M. Bürger on the two pictures, *L'Indifferent* and *La Finette*, on p. 65.

M. Léon Dumont enlarges upon the theory that the whole pantheon of painters is naturally divided into two schools by the atmospheric conditions of their homes; that in the cloudless South there can be no such study of the effects of light and shade as there is in those parts of the world where the light of day is subjected to the accidents of mist and fog, and where a great proportion of life is passed under cover, and by artificial light. Both schools existed in France, the one represented by

the classical painters, followers of the Italian method, and the other *par excellence* by Watteau.

> "It is remarkable," he adds, "that all these champions of light and colour in France come from the north of Europe. At the end of the fifteenth century we have the Clouets coming from Brussels to Paris, at the very period of the Italian renaissance under Leonardo da Vinci and Andrea del Sarto. The taste for the picturesque appears in the Clouet portraits in the prominence given to costumes, in feathered caps and bright-coloured tunics, rich armour and the glitter of precious stones. In the sixteenth century there are the brothers Le Nain; they were born at Laon, and probably instructed by a Fleming. Their rustic scenes and drinking booths are full of excellent treatment of reflected lights, their characters are peasants of Flanders and Picardy. Rubens had a powerful influence on the growth of French taste in art. He lived a long time at Paris, and the masterpieces that he produced there have ever since been studied, copied, or imitated by painters. After the conquest of Flanders and Hainault by Louis XIV. there were no Flemish painters excepting at Paris. Van der Meulen became the historiographer of the great king. A native of Lille, Monnoyer, was the first great flower painter who appeared in France; his chiaroscuro is admirable. Largillière was taught painting at Antwerp; he produced scenes of peasant life in the manner of Van Ostade, and puppet-shows after Pieter van Laar. Rigaud was not only the pupil of an imitator of Van Dyck, he imitated him himself, and his women are very Flemish. Tournières of Normandy, who made some charming compositions in the manner of Schalken and Gerard Dow, was trained in the first principles of painting by a Dutchman, Lucas of the Hague. Desportes, our first animal painter, was a disciple of the Fleming Nicasius, who was a pupil of Snyders; he certainly owes to these masters the freshness of his colouring. These were the precursors of Antoine Watteau in France."

It is, however, not to be supposed that it was from these "precursors" that Watteau derived his similarity of excellence with them. Their names are quoted as those of painters who, born and educated under similar influences, directed their talents to the same end as Watteau, and share with him the honours of the school of art which treated Light as "the soul of painting." It was not from each other that they derived this secret, but

from untrammelled study of the nature of their native skies. It seems absurd to argue that their merit in this respect was greater or less than that of the Italian school of painters who did the same. The great leaders of each school were ultimately truthful to Nature as they saw it, but Watteau has the peculiar merit of resisting in a world of fiction and conventionality, and under a drilling that would have turned a lesser genius into a scene painter, the debasing attractions of his time and surroundings.

The remarks of *M. Dussieux* ('Les Artistes Français à l'Étranger.') on the origin and tendency of Watteau's school are worth quoting. De la Fosse and Jouvenet, he says, are stages in the process of transition from the school of Le Brun to that of the eighteenth century. But in this interval there was a reaction in the whole French school of art, the first symptoms of which appear immediately after the death of Le Brun. Architects, engravers, and decorative artists shook off foreign and antique influences, and strove to create a new style of art of undeniable originality. "Le Moine and Watteau, the engravers Coyzevox and Coustou, the architects Robert de Cotte and De Boffrand, are the most illustrious representatives of this new phase of French art. Watteau — that eminent artist, the greatest colourist of the French school—is quite original, though he owes much to Gillot. The 'Fêtes galantes' and the 'Conversations' of Watteau are charming and spirited works of imagination, in design altogether French, and most wonderful in colour. This painting breaks with all the solemn traditions of the school of the seventeenth century, as completely as it deviates from the Flemish style in its nobility and elegance."

The changes that had come about in the style of decorating apartments reacted on painting in a regrettable degree, by excluding all pictures beyond a certain size. So we see Boucher, the pupil of Lemoine, and the principal painter of the age of Louis XV., painting nothing but genre subjects and decorations. After him the school fell almost entirely into a faded

voluptuous mannerism typical of the manners of the age; the most melancholy representatives of this decadence are Baudouin and Lavreince.

M. Diderot wrote, in 1767, "The French school has much degenerated, and will degenerate more. There is no more demand for large pictures. The luxury and evil morals which have subdivided the palaces into little cabinets will destroy the fine arts."

> "Le Brun," says Houssaye, "provoked the decadence; Watteau broke the yoke. Le Brun had tainted French art with the wig of Louis XIV.; Watteau brought back laughter and liberty in his 'fêtes galantes,' &c. Watteau delivered art from the academic traditions of Le Brun; then David, who was a sculptor rather than a painter, created a counter revolution."

But the school of Watteau had before this sunk into well-merited contempt, and his imitators and followers had nothing of his character but the choice and imitation of his subjects. This was not apprehended by his fellow-countrymen, though they saw foreign collectors competing eagerly for Watteau's works, and it has taken a hundred years of time to sift the real gold of Watteau's work from the dross of that of his followers, and to put him, as he ought to be, alone and unrivalled in the peculiar school that he rather *is* than founded.[1]

[1] Compare the criticisms of Wilkie—Sir Joshua Reynolds, and others, in Chapter IV., *ad fin.* p. 79.

WATTEAU.

CHAPTER I.

1684—1709.

BIRTH—PARENTAGE—LOCAL AND HEREDITARY INFLUENCES—EARLY EDUCATION, AND APPRENTICESHIP IN ART.

THE river Scheldt divides above Valenciennes into a great number of separate channels, which flow about among the narrow and tortuous streets of the city, and form a great moat of running water round the fortifications. In a corner on the north-west the branches of the river surround an island approached by a broad bridge on the south end, and occupied by the church of S. Jacques and the cloistral buildings pertaining to it. The register of this church contains the following entry:—

"On the tenth of October, 1684, was baptized Jean-Antoine, legitimate son of Jean Philippe Watteau, and of Michelle Lardenois his wife. Jean-Antoine Boucher, *parin*, Anne Maillar, *marène*. P. R. Ptre."

The city of Valenciennes had, at the above date, been French for a few years. Many centuries of flourishing independence and commercial prosperity, due to its situation at

the extreme inland point of the navigable Scheldt, had accustomed its citizens to wealth and the luxuries of life, among which last a liberal patronage of the fine arts, especially those of Antwerp, was traditional. The monasteries and private houses about Valenciennes contained important treasures of painting, including masterpieces by Rubens, Van Dyck, Martin de Vos, and other representatives of the Flemish school. The principal pictures still to be seen in the local museum were already there, and, no doubt, a great many which have since been destroyed in the revolutionary troubles, or in the English bombardment of the city in 1793. The proud and ancient city had before Watteau's birth endured more than a century of fearfully disastrous oppression. The citizens, in daily correspondence and full sympathy with their neighbours of the Netherlands, had freely adopted the doctrines of the Reformation, and, at first, this innovation, peacefully cultivated, produced unmitigated benefits. There was a contest of emulation in merit. The Roman clergy introduced much-needed reforms in the monasteries; the Reformers distributed their substance in abundant benefactions to the poor. But soon the character of the contest changed: "the Catholics raised pyres, the Protestants broke images." The break-out of iconoclasm at Valenciennes happened six days after that of Antwerp, on the 24th of August, 1566, six years to a day before the massacre of S. Bartholomew. The churches were sacked, the images broken, the convents plundered.

This outrage was fearfully avenged in the siege of the city in the following year by Noircarmes, who finally entered the gates on Palm Sunday, and found the streets lined with despairing groups of women and children, "dans tout le désordre de la douleur," *holding out branches of green palms in their hands.* Then followed the well-known episode of horror, the "conseil de sang;" the demoniac emissaries of Alba; a period of universal terror and confusion, and finally of general flight, by which in

less than a year, besides the innumerable deaths by execution or wholesale massacre, a hundred thousand houses were left standing empty, while all the neighbouring states were peopled with the fugitive inhabitants.

The next great disaster of the "munitissima urbs" was its siege by Louis XIV. in person, in the year 1677, when it was again taken by assault. The city was exempted from pillage on condition of its furnishing the funds for the construction of the citadel, afterwards built by Vauban. In 1701 it is described as "great, beautiful, commercial, rich, and very strong."

The transfer of this Flemish city to the crown of France did not alter the characteristics of the place or its inhabitants. In spite of their loss in wealth and independence, the Flemings of Valenciennes maintained their ancient qualities of thrift and industry, courage and perseverance; their women still cherished the form of happiness, for which Bernardin de S. Pierre praises them, of "incessant occupation in their household duties, and perpetual harmony with their husbands;" and their passion for cleanliness described by Madame de Bocage:—

> "Places where one walks are cleaner there than our plates and dishes. The women carry their husbands on their backs that they may not have to tread on the floors. The very cows have their tails tied up to keep them clean. The servant girls would despise a master who should refuse to have the furniture turned out to the barn for the Saturday's washing, and the windows and all the walls are washed every day."

A great body of enthusiastic commentary exists on the beauty of the Flemish women, especially of those of Valenciennes. Regnard, the comic author, who passed through the city in 1681, says in his journal, "We remarked that all the women in this country are beautiful." M. Dieudonné ('Statistique du Nord') says—

> "In general all ancient writers praise the beauty of the people, of both sexes, in these parts. It is observed, to this day, and especially in the cities, that the men are finer in feature than the women, and that

those of the latter possess more regularity than grace or refinement. As we advance towards the north we find those large, fine, strong women with the fresh complexions, with whom Rubens adorns his pictures, by the side of whom our delicate Parisians look like ghosts. Returning southward, at *Valenciennes*, for example, or Douai, there is more delicacy and softness (*mignardise*) in the features of the women."

If we now turn to a portrait of Antoine Watteau, it will not be difficult to re-clothe his careworn young face with the full Flemish regularity of feature, softened by the *mignardise* peculiar to his native city. Several portraits of Watteau, painted by himself, exist, and all of them represent a fair, delicate face of regular features, but giving full expression to that nervous sensibility of temperament which was his prominent characteristic.

From time immemorial the Flemings have been remarkable for the passion that is born in them for fêtes, fairs, and gala days; and what was said of them in the seventeenth century by Guicciardini ('Descrittione di tutti paesi bassi') is true to this day:

"They have such a love of joy and amusement that a journey of twenty-five, thirty, or forty leagues is not an obstacle to them when there is an opportunity of going to a feast, especially to one of those annual feasts called 'kermesses.'"

Any modern traveller who has passed by way of Liège and Cologne at carnival time, or has spent a kermess in Rotterdam, can confirm the old traveller's report. None of the abundant illustrations of these peasant gatherings which the Dutch masters have bequeathed to us have an inkling of the refinement with which Watteau has idealized the subject; but the fêtes themselves appear to have been identical throughout the Netherlands, and there is no reason to believe that those of Valenciennes differed from others in kind. The gross revels painted by Teniers and Van Ostade existed in Valenciennes, and the elegant harlequins of Watteau carried the same spangles into Holland. Watteau's subjects of this class are not French,

but Flemish; recollections of his home, not of the opera at Paris.

A peculiarly Flemish creation was Saint Pansard, personified Shrove Tuesday, the Carnival in person. He is of remote antiquity, and mentioned by Rabelais. On Ash Wednesday he was marched through the streets of Lille, in the likeness of a well-clothed person, fat and hearty, followed by a train of shop-keepers and fish-women. His procession was renewed every Sunday, but at each appearance his corpulence diminished and his train of attendants dwindled. On Palm Sunday he appeared pale, exhausted, and with no attendants but a surgeon and apothecary. Finally on Easter Eve he died in the streets at noonday in the arms of a hospital nurse.

Among the Flemish festivals, M. Dinaux mentions those specially appointed for the children: S. Gregory for the smaller school-children, S. Catherine for the girls, S. Nicolas for the boys, Christmas of course for all, and finally Innocents Day, which used to be observed in the following singular manner. The youngest child in the household was on that day its master, and, dressed in the clothes and wearing the jewellery and laces of the head of the house, gave his orders to the servants who attended his levee and received their instructions for the arrangements of the day, which were faithfully carried out (subject, it is to be presumed, to the restrictions of prudence and possibility).

Watteau has shown in his works that in respect to the appreciation of festivals he was a true son of his country, and the earliest authentic record that we have of his childish days is connected with his love for the histrionics of the market-place.

The Watteau,[1] or, as it would be written in the Rouchi dialect,

[1] In the old Walloon language the W is substituted for G, and the very name 'Wallon' is derived from 'Gallus.' 'Watteau' stands for 'Gateau,' as 'William' does for 'Guillaume,' &c. (*A. Dinaux*).

Wattiau, family was very respectably represented at Valenciennes, at the time of the painter's birth, by a number of prosperous citizens, who were in all probability the common descendants of one Denis Wasteau, a mercer ("merchier"), who was made a citizen of Valenciennes in 1586. Jean Philippe Watteau himself, the father of the artist, was a slater and tiler, whose contracts with the municipality are on record in the quaint dialect of the period. In 1683 M. Watteau "couvre de thuiles ung lieu situé tout proche des escuries des pavillons et proche des archers" (*i. e.* tiled over a place near the stables, &c.). In 1684 he has another contract for the manufacture and delivery of tiles for the "little slaughter-house." This contract is labelled "sur recours." Six years later he undertakes a much more important piece of work, apparently of a permanent nature, which proves him beyond a doubt to have been at this time (Antoine being six years of age) in enjoyment of capital and credit. The contract was for the "maintenance of the tiled roofs of the old and new buildings 'de ceste ville,' of the Dominical school and its dependencies, and also of the roofs of the barracks, of the citadel, of the 'pavillons' and ramparts of the city." Cellier mentions other contracts in which Jean Philippe is interested, including one by which he sells a house of his own, situated in the Rue des Cardinaux. It does not appear that he was either a poor or an uneducated man for his period and position, and he signs his own name on the registers of the church of S. Jacques in a clear bold handwriting.

It is probable that Antoine Watteau was born in a street called the Rue basse du Rempart, but conclusive evidence on which this would rest is lost with the census of 1684. The next existing census is that of 1697, or Antoine's thirteenth year. Jean Philippe had left the parish of S. James at that time, and lived with his family in a house of the Rue des Chartreux, at the corner of the street called "Under the Vine" (No. 20 of Rue de Mons). In 1699 the master tiler had returned to his old

LANDSCAPE STUDY.

parish, to a new house built near the gateway of the Abbey of S. Jean. In a view by Simon Leboucq, dated 1650, we have a view of this abbey standing alone in open ground. The monks, however, subsequently built themselves in by a screen of houses, which they found very profitable, and it was in one of these houses, "the seventh from the entrance," that the young Antoine Watteau was living and working at that critical time of his life when he made his first studies in the art of painting. He was already nearly sixteen years old.

The broad open space in front of Watteau's home was the scene, on market-days, of the performances of the quack doctors and mountebanks of the period, who erected their booths under his father's windows. These performances Antoine was never tired of watching, as he sat on the window-sill in a trance of admiration, unconscious of the sordid reality of the life that Harlequin and Columbine covered with silks and spangles.

> "Was not this glamour," says M. Houssaye, "typical of Watteau's whole career? His eye stopped at the superficial beauties of form and colour, but never penetrated to the soul. It was the fault of his time and of his school. The comedy queens and opera nymphs of the Regency had nothing to do with the affections. The theatre is a place where the heart is kept concealed."

Antoine, we are told, when his gay friends were gone, affectionately perpetuated their figures by sketches of them, which he made upon the broad white margins of the pages of a 'Vie des Saints' belonging to his father.

His unsuspecting parent was struck with the dreamy melancholy of the boy, and especially by his evident attachment to religious literature, and thought Antoine was directing his mind to a monastic life. When, however, he discovered the illustrations that Antoine had made in his book, he took them at once to a local painter, who found in them so much merit that he immediately asked to be allowed to instruct the boy in the principles of his art.

Either in the above way, or probably by some other and more prosaic, the father of Antoine discovered his son's bent for art, and, although a favourite legend exists to the contrary, sent him to be instructed accordingly. Antoine was at this age no ordinary boy. We have contemporary evidence of this from Gersaint, who was his friend, and M. de Caylus, who adds that "Watteau had a delicate taste for music and all other works of genius; that he was continually reading, and profited by what he read." Many of his letters are preserved, and are elegantly written. Moreover, he had been brought up among artists, his family being intimate with that of the engraver Pater, and one of his cousins, Julien Watteau, who was a few years older than himself, was a historical painter.[1]

The struggles of Watteau's later life were real and severe, but there is no foundation for the romance that would have them begin in his infancy. His first master in painting was Jaques Albert Gérin, upon whom all the romantic biographers heap contumely, and exalt the genius of Antoine, which could take root and flourish under the teaching of a master "qui ne peignit qu'à la toise" (says Goncourt). "Ou du moins il s'en fallait si peu que cela ne vaut pas la peine d'être discuté." Hécart, on the contrary, speaks highly of the talent of Gérin, praising his accuracy of drawing, his clever composition, portraiture, and historical paintings. He says that Gérin would have rivalled the greatest masters if to his other gifts he had added that of colour. Nearly all the works of this artist have been destroyed in the revolutionary wars of 1793. There survive an *Adoration of the Magi* at Douai, in the church of Notre Dame, and another in the church of S. Catherine at Lille. At Valenciennes also there remain three respectable, not excellent, pictures.[2]

[1] Julien was admitted "master painter" in 1693, when Watteau was nine years of age (*Cellier*).

[2] The finest of the pictures of Gérin was at the Carmelites. The ladies of Beaumont, the Sepmeriennes, the Urbanistes possessed several; that

The man was probably no genius, but had sufficient technical experience and knowledge of first principles in his art for the instruction of a boy of Antoine's age. Gérin, moreover, was officially the painter laureate of the municipality of the city; president also of the local guild of the painters and engravers. In the year 1685 the records show that he was paid twenty-five lire for painting the Royal Arms "mises dans ung ouve en dessus de la grande salle d'entrée de Monseigneur le Gouverneur" (Magalotti). In 1681 he had received the commission to design a series of subjects from the life of S. Giles, the patron saint of Valenciennes, which were subsequently worked out in tapestry for the chapel of S. Peter. Designs, tapestry, and chapel have all vanished now; the record of the payments on account of Gérin's work has, however, been preserved by accident, and is interesting enough in its quaint antiquity.

The romantic biographers, in their contempt for poor Gérin, affect to doubt whether Watteau really studied under him at all, but Hécart brings forward the testimony of contemporaries to establish the fact. Some pieces, in the style of Teniers, painted

which was at the Chapelle de l'Intendance, called *Vicoignette*, was the admiration of connoisseurs. The figures were so perfectly draped that there was no monotony that would be expected in a picture where almost all the figures were Carmelites. This picture of his was also that in which the flesh tints were the truest to nature. In all his works the draperies were perfect; he painted as if he had studied from the antique, whereas only nature and taste had been his masters. (*Hécart*, 1825.)

Existing pictures by Gérin:—

1. In the Museum (No. 91 of the catalogue), a small picture representing a child resting on a skull, and blowing soap-bubbles. The work is not "transcendant," but shows skill and boldness.

2. In the chapel of the Hospital, an important canvas, *S. Giles healing the sick in one of the churches of Orleans.* This is a good picture, justifying all Hécart's praises. The drawing is correct, the composition well arranged, but the colouring is defective. It is signed "J. A. Gérin 1691." It is a work of his old age.

3. In the church at Fresnes, a picture of a monk adoring the Holy Child. This was formerly in the Chapelle de l'Intendance.

in the house of Gérin by Watteau, are extant; among them one bearing the title of *La vraie Gaieté*, which was afterwards etched by its possessor, M. Lehardy de Faniars. It is a small picture of a dance of Flemish peasants, showing, says M. de Goncourt, "this future 'peintre galant' in full, servile imitation of Teniers, and plagiarizing his scenes of drinkers at the door of an inn." The picture was dedicated to the daughter of the engraver of it, a Valenciennes amateur, whom De Goncourt calls a patron of Watteau "after the manner of the Baron de Joursanvault for the debuts of Prudhon."

Gérin died in 1702, and in the same year Watteau, then eighteen years of age, quitted his native town for Paris. The circumstances under which Antoine set out for Paris are not provable. The legend (told by *M. Dinaux*) that he was brought to Paris by a scene painter is not based on any good evidence, and, as *Cellier* says, "Nobody has ever given a name to this scene painter, and the whole story is apocryphal." The narrative of Gersaint, professing as it does to be based on Watteau's own confessions in conversation, bears internal evidence of at least careless inattention, and this might be expected from the momentary character of the purpose that it was intended to serve, for insertion in an auction catalogue of objects of art. Watteau *père*, he says, was a naturally stern man, and embarrassed for money, so that the expense of Antoine's education became troublesome to him, and on the death of Gérin he refused to make any further provision for it. Whereupon Antoine, who was already chafing at the restraints of his home life, and full of ambition in his art, left home without money or luggage, and took refuge in Paris, in search of a painter who would teach him his art. Here he fell in by chance with Métayer, "peintre médiocre," whom he very soon left for want of work; he then entered the service of a still humbler genius, who carried on a wholesale business in cheap pictures for provincial hawkers. In all this there is no confirmation of the story of the scene painter.

D'Argenville, however, in 'L'abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres,' tells the story differently, and says that Watteau, sensible of his master's want of genius, *left him* to follow another who had a talent for theatrical decorations; came with this other to Paris in 1702, and worked with him upon a commission that he had at the Opera House, in which he was afterwards supplanted by Gillot, when the master returned to Valenciennes and Watteau remained in Paris. This story is confirmed to some extent by M. de Julienne, the great friend of Watteau, who says that Watteau worked at theatrical decoration under this scene painter. It is probably true that he did so, and that this was the origin of his acquaintance with Gillot, but it cannot be true that he *left* Gérin for the reason stated, because we know that it was upon Gérin's *death* that he left Valenciennes. M. Arsène Houssaye, in pursuit as usual of romance, represents the boy plunging at his first débût into all the *vie galante* of the Opera, painting portraits of Mademoiselle La Montagne and her frail sisters of the ballet, and disputing their favours with the roués of the court with all the gay *insouciance* of an experienced old libertine of the period.

> "Une danseuse qui n'avait pas grand' chose à faire se laissa peindre par lui. Watteau fit durer le portrait plus long temps que les dédains de Mademoiselle La Montagne. Ce ne fut pas tout. On trouva le portrait si gracieux dans le monde des danseuses qu'il lui vint tous les jours des portraits à faire au même prix."

If he could paint portraits and achieve conquests like this at the age of eighteen, his time at Valenciennes must have been more profitably employed than Gérin's detractors admit.

It is not difficult to judge from the pictures in the Lacaze collection, of Watteau's style of painting in his early days. M. Léon Dumont, in his monograph for the public conference at Valenciennes, says of the gradual development of Watteau's talent that—

"There is such a difference between his early and his later style that he seems to have passed all intermediate stages between the most opposed qualities. In his first attempts his touch is as 'dry' as it will hereafter be soft and harmonious. His handling is already remarkably light, but the outlines are sharp and too abrupt, the drawing is moderately correct, the draperies are stiff. The colouring is no less different from what it will be in the end; it is dazzlingly clear, but transparent, monotonous, without power, and like enamel painting. Watteau is not yet initiated in the secrets of the chiaroscuro, and it is remarkable that these are precisely the faults of Gérin, his Valenciennes master. There are the same feeble colouring and the same dry treatment in a canvas of this painter, now hung in the General Hospital of that city—*S. Giles healing the Sick.* The same faults are to be seen in the landscape painter Dubois, another pupil of Gérin. (M. Albert Coutin, the keeper of the Museum at Valenciennes, has two of his pictures.) The character of the first manner of Watteau is almost that of the little school of painting of which the capital of French Hainault was the centre at the end of the seventeenth century."

Among the pictures attributable to the period of Watteau's early struggles is, according to Thoré, that called *the Signature of the Contract of the Village Wedding*, engraved by Cardon. The engraving of it is dedicated to the Duke of Arenberg, whose family still have the signature of Watteau to the receipt. A sketch for this picture is mentioned in Goncourt's 'Œuvre,' of the notary of the Italian comedy presenting a pen. M. Léon Dumont brings forward this picture, in comparison with later works, as an example of his style before he had acquired that admirable knowledge of the effects of light by which his greatest productions are distinguished.

The figures in this picture may be counted by the hundred. The artist has got good effects of light and shade; he has managed his "points de rappels" skilfully; his aërial perspective is admirable; but the tones are deficient in warmth, and the study of the half-tints defective. In his period of maturity, on the contrary, he attains perfection; *then* this disciple of Rubens has learned to place for a charming contrast in the midst of his foliage a white statue of Venus or Pan, a garland of flowers, or an intruding head among the branches; *then* he throws the warm, red glare of a torch across the midnight darkness, upon his *Actors of the Italian Comedy*, or his *Masqueraders*

in a Venetian Street; or the pale blue rays of the moon on an amorous couple; *then* all his colours are charged with life, the sun joyfully caresses the rosy cheeks, the sparkling eyes, the ribands and robes of silk of his fresh little beauties.

The masterpieces of Watteau are not only festivals of gallantry, they are also festivals of LIGHT.

With the return of Gillot to the Opera, and of his patron scene painter to Valenciennes, Antoine, supposing M. Houssaye's romantic narrative to be accurate, had the great good fortune of being thrust out of his Capua into the hard realities of a struggle for existence. We next find him in the workshop of a real slave-driver, doing penance for the past, whatever it was. His new employer is a merchant of the Pont Notre Dame, whose business consisted in the production of small portraits and devotional subjects, which provincial dealers bought from him wholesale, by the gross. He had in his employment a dozen or so of miserable pupils who were trained to work mechanically, and were valued according to their rapidity of execution. The labour was systematically divided among them—each had his allotted part of it. Some washed in the skies, others did the heads, others the draperies, others put in lights and shadows; a last batch gave a finishing touch. Watteau was an "all-round" genius at this work, and remarkably rapid. His particular branch of the business was the portrait of S. Nicholas, which, like an Egyptian sculpture, he turned out by the score, all after one model. "I knew my S. Nicholas by heart," he said to Gersaint, "and used to do him without the copy." His wages for the tiresome and unprofitable work were three lire a week, which would be equivalent to twelve shillings of our money.

From this slavery he was delivered by the intervention of Gillot, who (says M. de Julienne), having seen some drawings and pictures by Watteau, invited him to come and live with him.[1] Watteau had had up to this time but little instruction

[1] 'Abrégé de la Vie d' A. W.' preface to the volume of etchings from designs by Watteau.

from his taskmasters. He had, however, acquired experience and facility, "and," says M. Léon Dumont,

> "What he had not learned at Valenciennes he learned alone, and without guidance. None of the painters whom he had to work for when he went in search of fortune to Paris could have seriously influenced him. The secrets of his admirable colouring were not derived from the dealer who set him to paint S. Nicholas by the dozen; nor from Metayer, a simple opera decorator; nor from Audran, who made nothing but cameos; nor Gillot, who was a mere designer and engraver."

But from Gillot he learned something else. M. de Caylus says that Watteau in after life praised Gillot's works, and acknowledged that he was much indebted to him. It was not, as some biographers say, entirely by chance that the two artists met. M. de Julienne says that Gillot, having seen some of Watteau's drawings, invited him to come and live with him. Gillot was at that time confining his work to subjects of Italian comedy, and "this kind of composition," says M. de Caylus, "gave the bent to Watteau's taste."[1]

Of Watteau's connection with Gillot, we read that in a short time the pupil surpassed his master, and, leaving him behind, became distinguished for that closer study of nature that he never afterwards abandoned, and that when Gillot saw himself beaten by Watteau's *fêtes champêtres*, he put him with Claude Audran.

[1] Gillot, born at Langrès in 1673, was a pupil of Jean Baptiste Corneille, and had a genius for grotesque figures, for fauns and satyrs, and opera scenes. He was admitted to the Academy in 1715, and died at Paris in 1722. M. de Julienne says: "He designed with spirit and taste, he engraved with the same qualities, but he was inaccurate, and so bad a painter that his works were buried with him." In Gersaint's catalogue we find mention of "*The triumph of Harlequin God Pan*, comic subject, engraved in black and white by Jacques Sarabat, after the painting by Claude Gillot. This, he says, is one of the first pictures done in this style, and, having met with general approval, it has given origin to many others which have been since produced by *Vateau*," etc. (*Catalogue de Lorangère*).

M. de Caylus says that Watteau broke with Gillot, and would never in after life explain the reasons of the rupture. He praised his work, and acknowledged how much he owed him. On the other hand; whether Gillot acted from jealousy, and perceived that his pupil had surpassed him, or not, he abandoned painting, and devoted all his attention to etching, for which he is celebrated in respect of the intelligence and harmony of his compositions. He illustrated in this manner most of the fables of La Fontaine.

Gersaint says—

> "Never were two characters or dispositions more alike, but, as they had the same faults, never were there two more incompatible. They could not have lived together long on a good understanding. Never a fault escaped notice on either side, and they were at last obliged to separate in a manner disagreeable to them both. Some say that Gillot's jealousy was the cause, but, however that be, it is certain that they separated with at least as much satisfaction as they had previously united."

All this contemporary gossip on the subject throws light on the character and position of the two men, and seems to indicate that their connection was of the character of friendship, and their separation a matter of regret, at least to Watteau.

It was in Gillot's studio that Watteau found his pupil Lancret, who followed him, and whom he advised, says Gersaint, to "form himself from the study of nature."

Allan Cunningham takes the view that Gillot was a good friend to his pupil, and describes in a few words their probable relation.

> "Fortune at length grew weary of persecuting him. He became accidentally acquainted with Claude Gillot, a master in all things grotesque, who took him to his house, revealed the secrets of his profession, and *read him a chapter on the world and its ways.*"

The young adventurer, hitherto the sport of fortune, certainly appears to have added, after his connection with Gillot, a more prudent care of his interests, and study of expediency, to the unflagging industry of his career.

Soon after his parting with Gillot we find Watteau domiciled with Claude Audran, the concierge or guardian of the Luxembourg, working under his direction upon the decorations of the palace, inserting figures in the arabesques and other designs for which he is celebrated; which, as M. de Caylus remarks, were of the kind of those introduced into the decoration of the Vatican by Raphael, and in the palace of Fontainebleau by Primaticcio.[1] This Claude Audran came of a family in which the pursuit of art was traditional, and which had produced a number of skilful engravers from the time of Charles Audran, who flourished in the commencement of the seventeenth century.[2] Claude was the son and pupil of Germain Audran; he had two uncles, also artists, Gérard and Claude, and is called, in distinction from the latter, Claude le jeune. He died in the Luxembourg in 1734. In the latest edition of Brice's 'Description de Paris,' edited by Mariette in 1752, there is the following note under the article 'Luxembourg':—

[1] Francesco Primaticcio, Abbé de S. Martin, a native of Bologna, 1490—1570, continued under Francis I. the ornamentation of the palace at Fontainebleau, commenced by Rosso de' Rossi. His principal work there, the gallery of Ulysses, is now known to us only by Van Thulden's etchings.

[2] In truth the roll of these Audrans as a family of engravers is long and distinguished, viz.: *Charles* (1594—1674) and his brother *Claude I.* (1597—1677); *Gérard* (1640—1703), the third son of Claude I., and the most celebrated of the family, eminent as the author of a work on "the proportions of the human figure" (published at Paris 1680). *Benoît I.* (son of Germain, eldest son of Claude I.), his nephew and pupil (1661—1721), and *Jean* (1667—1756), brother of the last, also the pupil of Gérard. Then *Claude II.* (1639—1684), the second son of the above-mentioned Claude, and pupil of his uncle Charles, a painter who executed works for the Gobelins under the tyranny of Le Brun, whom he imitated. *Claude III.*, eldest son of Germain, and friend of Watteau, painted grotesques and foliage with spirit. He died in the palace of the Luxembourg, 1734, at the age of seventy-six. *Germain*, painter and engraver, of Lyons (1631—1710), pupil of his father Claude and his uncle Carle. *Jean* (1667—1756), and *Louis* (1670—1712), fourth and youngest son of Germain.

"Claude Audran, concierge of the palace, is justly considered one of the first designers who has ever appeared for *arabesques* and *grotesques*. He has left a number of his works; especially in the Château at Meudon, in that of Anet, in the Menagerie at Versailles (arabesques on a gold ground with illustrations of the fables of La Fontaine), where he has done admirable work, more beautiful and ingenious than anything ever yet seen of its kind in France. The celebrated animal painter Desportes worked with Audran at the Luxembourg. Watteau was employed to insert small figures in his designs on the ceiling."

It was in the Luxembourg that Watteau's taste for decorative designs was perfected, and that he acquired that peculiar lightness and delicacy of manipulation which the white or gilded grounds of Audran, upon which he had to work, required. A representative collection of Watteau's ornamental designs is contained in a work published in Edinburgh in 1841.[1] In these the poetic fancy and the delicacy of the dreamlike fairy-land of Watteau's genius are already developed. Audran himself is eminent for his introduction of grace and lightness into his ornamentation, advancing the reaction that was in progress from the ponderous conventionalities of Lebrun, under whose direction his uncle, Claude II., designed for the Gobelins.

A more important source of instruction than the decorative studies that he had to work upon for Audran existed in the Rubens gallery, where, we are told, he spent a great part of his hours of leisure, and soon "lost all traces of the manner of Gillot, and acquired a better tone of colour, a finer, more accurate, and more skilful style of design." The beautiful gardens of the palace, "wilder," says M. de Caylus, "and *moins peignés*" than those of the other royal residences, were open to him, and here he incessantly studied—probably for the first time in his life—the beauties of nature in landscape. It is here in the Luxembourg, and in the gardens of M. Crozat at Montmorency, that we

[1] 'The ornamental designs of Watteau collected from his works, lithographed by W. Nichol.'

are to look for the earliest inspiration of Watteau's idealized landscape :

> "With its trees, of foliage *trickling* and *cascading* to the ground ; and boskets of witch-elm spreading a fan-shaped screen behind the siesta of lovers ; and arches of verdure opening like the side scenes of a theatre ; and pathways thronged with 'a minuet in a sunbeam ;' and great forests rolling up their shade over groups of bathing girls, like the partial letting down of a curtain ; and all that evanescent foliage touched with his 'fluid' colour, and decorated with balustrades, terms, statues, and women of marble and children of stone, and fountains enveloped in rain, of which Watteau has created a Nature 'plus belle que la Nature'"[1] (*Goncourt*).

The critic points out how all the forest shadows and leafy screens of Watteau's landscape are broken with glimpses of light,

> "Which carry the eye to the sky, to perspectives, to horizons, to distance, to the infinite, to luminous and empty space—*provoking dreams*. . . The nobility with which Watteau clothes his academic landscape is the poetry of the painter-poet ; and with this poetry he '*super-naturalizes*,' so to speak, the corner of the earth that his pencil paints. Idealized landscapes ; landscapes attaining in the poetry of their composition something of the supernatural to which the material art of the painter cannot attain alone,—this is the characteristic of the landscape of Watteau. This is the characteristic of that *Enchanted Isle*, where, on the banks of a lake of water stagnant, glittering, and losing itself in the distance among the shadows of trees penetrated by the rays of the setting sun, we see a group of men and women seated on the grass, their eyes turned towards the snowy mountains of the other shore, beyond an immense level plain that has no boundaries nor end. and is marked out in mirage by the horizontal light of the evening."[2]

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[1] "Parée à la Françoise, un jour dame Nature
Eut le désir coquet de voir sa portraiture.
Que fit la bonne mère ?—Elle enfanta Watteau.
Pour elle ce cher fils, plein de reconnoissance,
Non content de tracer partout sa ressemblance,
Fit tant et fit si bien, qu'il la *peignit en beau*."
(*Lamothe-Houdar*.)

[2] The picture was offered for sale from the collection of the late M. A. Febvre (April, 1882).

STUDY FOR DECORATION.

I cannot discover in any of the authorities that I have been able to consult any reliable dates to serve as landmarks in the history of this part of the master's life. About seven years have to be accounted for between his arrival at Paris in 1702, and his gaining of the prize at the Academy in 1709; but what portions of this period of apprenticeship he spent at the Opera, at the Pont Notre Dame, with Gillot and with Audran respectively, I have not been able to ascertain.

One author states that it was during his residence at the Luxembourg that Watteau worked for the Academy prize; but M. de Caylus arranges it otherwise, although it appears probable that the desire to revisit his native city ripened with his first substantial success.

However this may be, it is obvious from the following part of the narrative of M. Gersaint, that although Watteau may have profited by the opportunities of study afforded him during his employment under Audran, his remuneration for his work was not such as to enrich him: and his master, however talented, was not more disinterested or generous in his treatment of Watteau than Gillot or the wholesale dealer. The same suspicion attaches to Gersaint himself, friendly and intimate as his relations with the painter became, and still more strongly to the father-in-law of Gersaint, who, as we shall see, subsequently hid him away in a corner out of sight of the world, while he bought his pictures of him.

The following is the description in Gersaint's narrative of the manner of Watteau's separation from Claude Audran, which seems to exemplify still more the careless contempt of money with which Watteau managed his affairs, selling his pictures at prices regulated rather by his own immediate need than by their value.

"Not wishing to remain with Audran, nor to pass his life in working for another man, and conscious of the power of his imagination, he ventured upon a painting of genius which he produced in

the intervals of his labours, representing a *Departure of Troops.*[1] (This is one of the two pictures which were engraved by M. Cochin père.) Watteau showed it to M. Audran, and asked his advice upon it. Audran, a clever man, and able to recognize a fine work, was startled by the merit that he perceived in this picture, but for fear of losing an assistant who was useful to him, and on whom he had begun to rely very often for the arrangement and even for the composition of his work, he advised Watteau not to waste his attention upon follies of that kind, but to devote it to his regular work. Watteau, however, was not deceived. He had decided upon leaving, and the wish to see Valenciennes again confirmed his resolution. The plea that he wanted to visit his parents was a sufficient one, but he had no money. He consulted in this difficulty a M. Spoude, who is still alive, a painter from his own neighbourhood, and a private friend. Chance guided M. Spoude to my father-in-law, M. Sirois, and he showed him the picture. *The price was fixed at sixty livres* (!), and the bargain concluded on the spot. Watteau fetched his money and set out gaily for Valenciennes. It was all his fortune, and he had never been so rich before."

There do not appear in any of the authorities at hand any details of the visit that Watteau now paid to his native city. D'Argenville simply tells us that "he left Paris to study in his own country, and returned a short time afterwards."

There exists, in effect, no such work as a systematic biography of Watteau, referring the incidents of his life to their dates, or even narrating them with any approach to accuracy in the order in which they occurred. As M. Cellier remarks of the innumerable short treatises that have appeared on this subject—

"All these clever virtuosi have done, has been to labour to enrich with the products of their own brilliant imaginations a worn-out melody, but they cannot hide its insignificance. It is easy to see that the common origin of all these ingenious works has been the dry statement given by Gersaint in the catalogue of the Quentin collection of the Orangère."

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[1] *Départ de Garnison*, No. 59 of the 'Œuvre' of Goncourt. (See p. 62.)

CHAPTER II.

1709—1719.

VISIT TO VALENCIENNES—ADMISSION TO THE ACADEMY—LIFE IN PARIS.

THE date of Watteau's return to Valenciennes being determined by that, upon record, of the success of his competition for the Academy prize, brings our narrative to the year 1709, the twenty-fifth of his life, and the seventh of his apprenticeship at Paris.

In 1702 he had entered the great arena, armed only with his youthful enthusiasm, and sufficient knowledge of the principles of his art, acquired from Gérin or otherwise, to enable him to be useful to the scene painter at the Opera House; if not, according to the romantic legend of Arsène Houssaye, to win the hearts of the *danseuses* by painting their portraits. The theatrical life must have touched his hereditary Flemish love of pageants, and the same chords as the Harlequins and Columbines that he sketched in his infancy from the windows of his father's house in the market-place; and the glamour of the mimic paradise of the Opera must have fallen upon him, at his impressionable age, with the force of an enchantment never, in the short dream of his after life, to be dissolved. The memory of it must have been brooding in him during his mechanical drudgery in the workshop of the Pont Notre Dame. One wonders where all the heads of

S. Nicholas are gone to that he produced at this period; and if any were found, would there not be about them some touch of a higher aim, some indication of the genius that was wasted upon their production? How the smouldering fire must have flashed out its hoarded energies with the first glimpse of freedom and congenial air under Gillot!—on opera subjects again; and where are the records of this pathetic drama hidden? Even the dates of his servitude and liberation are lost. What a pitiful story it is—of a chained genius, whose only knowledge of the realities of life and of nature was drawn through the mimicry of the stage; whose school of art was an upholsterer's studio, and his models the inventions of Lebrun! Unlike other happier students of art, he had to *create* his nature from a study of its caricature; until in a fortunate hour the gallery of Rubens and the Luxembourg gardens (*moins peignés*) lay before him, and he was able to spring into sympathy at once with the tendencies of his own Flemish school of art in Rubens, and the perfection of nature in the "moderately cultivated" gardens of the palace.

What part of the seven years, 1702—1709, was spent with Gillot, and what part with Audran, or how soon before or after his success at the Academy he took his trip to Valenciennes, is not known; any more than the length of his residence at his native city, or what he did there, or when he returned to Paris. All that M. Gersaint tells us of the visit to Valenciennes, and therefore all that the later compilers from his short treatise are able to tell, is told in the following sentence: "The fickleness of Watteau's character, and the little that he found worthy of his emulation at Valenciennes, where he had nothing under his eyes that could animate and instruct him, decided him to return to Paris."

M. Cellier, a native of Valenciennes, is jealous for the honour of the city, and denies that it could have wanted attractions for the painter's genius.

"Too little respect," he says, "has been paid to the artistic surroundings of Watteau's youth, which was the very cradle of the art of the

eighteenth century. This Flemish city, made French against its will by the force of events, and partly ruined by the conquest, takes revenge in endowing France with an incomparable school of art; producing Watteau and Pater in painting, D'Eisen for design, and De Saly the engraver; *i. e.* four of the most distinguished artists of the century."

M. Cellier claims that the school of French art *par excellence* came forth fully established from Valenciennes, as the origin of all Flemish painting was the same in the time of Harlinde and Relinde.[1]

That art was not neglected at Valenciennes at the date of Watteau's return is proved by the then flourishing condition of the corporation or guild of artists and engravers, formed on the model of that of Holland, under the patronage of S. Luke, of which Jacques Albert Gérin had been the president. The artists had before this incident been confounded with the "gorliers,[2] esperonniers, scelliers, armoyeurs et autres mesthiers,"

[1] The story of these two sisters, and of their connection with the discoveries of the Van Eycks, is given in the 'Révue des Cours littéraires de la France et de l'Étranger,' by M. Ch. Potrin :—

"An ancient legend exists of two sisters, named Harlinde and Relinde, children of the Seigneur de Denain, who in the year 714 finished their education in the convent des Récollets of Valenciennes (the burial-place of Jacques de Guise, the celebrated author of the 'Chroniques du Hainaut,' 1398), and, removing to the place called Maes Eyck, in the Liège country, founded there a monastery, and devoted their lives to the art of illuminating manuscripts, transplanting in this manner from the Hainault to the cradle of the two founders of Flemish art the study of colour that culminated in the great improvements made by the Van Eycks in the art of painting in colours mixed with oil. By a similar solidarity of progress later on, in literature, we see Jean le Bel removing from Liège to Valenciennes, and becoming the instructor of the historian Froissart; and again, in painting, the schools of Maestricht and of Tournai preceded and introduced that of Bruges, and finally one school of Flemish art had its disciples in all the towns of the Belgian provinces Dinant, Liège, Brussels, Mechlin, Antwerp, Bruges."

[2] Qy. *joailliers.*

under the branch of S. George. It was about fifty years after this that the two Watteaus of Lille flourished; their relationship to Antoine is not recorded. The elder of them, Louis Joseph Watteau, in 1755, succeeded M. Dachou at the academy of Lille, and it is he who, with his colleague M. Tillier, was expelled by the magistrates for introducing the study from the nude. Later on he was reappointed, and, in 1795, he made an inventory of the works of art deposited in the municipality; he died at Lille the 27th August, 1798. His son Louis François Joseph was born at Valenciennes the 19th August, 1758. It is he who is most usually described as Watteau of Lille. He painted rustic scenes and designs for fans, and ceilings, panellings, &c. He gained the medal of the Lille Academy, and in 1774 went to study at Paris under Durameau.[1] It has been worth while to mention these incidents, as showing that the Hainault was still actively maintaining its position in the domain of art;[2] and because the works of the two Watteaus of Lille, especially of the younger, are often confounded with those of the great master of the same name.

It would have been pleasant, had materials existed, to have accompanied the wearied and melancholy poet-painter in his visit to the scenes of his youth, under the sound of the Flemish carillons.[3] If M. de Caylus is accurate in the order of his narrative, he must have painted there the picture of *David granting Abigail the pardon of Nadal;* and M. de Gersaint informs us that it was there that he painted for M. Sirois the

[1] See the article in the 'Archives du Nord' by M. Dinaux, tom. iii. p. 447.

[2] Among the painters who flourished at Valenciennes at the period of Watteau's visit, I may mention Jean Baptiste Van-Moor, a painter of Oriental subjects, born at Valenciennes 1670, died 22 January, 1737.

[3] "Les horloges flamandes étaient toutes ornées de carillons, et de figures qui représentaient des scènes mouvantes à chaque sonnerie d'heure ou demi-heure" ('Description de tous les Pays Bas,' *par* Loys Guicciardin, 1565).

pendant of the first picture he had sold to him, and forwarded it to Paris, receiving in payment this time 200 livres. The subject represented was the *Halt of an Army;* "the whole of it," says Gersaint, "was painted from nature, and the pair of pictures have always been regarded as the two finest things that have come out of his hands."[1] But on this subject it must be remembered that M. de Gersaint was a dealer in pictures, and was speaking of some that were his own property.

I have already quoted Gersaint's account of Watteau's stay at Valenciennes, and the motives of his return to Paris. M. de Caylus carries forward the narrative as follows :—

> "He then left his native place (he did not make a long stay there) and returned to Paris. His wish to go to Rome and take advantage of the fine establishment that Louis XIV. has made there for the advancement of the arts and of pupils, prompted him *some time afterwards* to enter the ranks for the prize of your school. He gained the second prize in the year 1709, with the subject of *David granting Abigail the pardon of Nadab*, but was not admitted for the journey, the first prize having been awarded to Antoine Grison. He was forced, therefore, to content himself with the pursuit of his studies at Paris, which he did—without, however, abandoning his project.
>
> "In 1712 he brought before you, with this intention, some pictures in his own style, far superior to that with which he had gained the prize. A talent 'formé et très-distingué' and the uselessness of the journey that he solicited were motives for the Academy to admit him (*à l'agréer*)."

In the short paragraph quoted above we have the only record of a period of about three years, from 1709 to 1712, which appear (according to the narrative of M. de Caylus) to have been passed by Watteau in Paris "in pursuit of his studies," but where or under what circumstances we are not informed. . . D'Argenville, in the 'Abrégé,' gives his account of the matter as though the incident of his admission to the Academy followed closely upon his return from Valenciennes. It is indeed singular (as Gersaint states that the pictures he exhibited were the pair he

[1] See No. (52) of the 'Works,' p. 62.

painted, one before and one during his holiday, for M. Sirois) that the interval of three years should have produced no other pictures than these for him to bring forward for an object so important to himself. If M. de Caylus is in error in this instance, it is possible he may be so also in his statement that the competition for the Academy followed instead of preceded the holiday. D'Argenville then says—

> "He quitted Paris to return to his own country to study, and returned *quelque temps après.* Two pictures of the same size were exhibited in a gallery of the Louvre, through which the painters of the Academy were in the habit of passing. The celebrated La Fosse, seeing these two pictures, was surprised by them, and inquired the name of their author. He was told that they were the works of a young man who wished to go to learn his profession at Rome. *Wateau* waited upon him. 'My friend,' said La Fosse, 'you are unconscious of your talent; you know more than we do, and you may be an honour to our Academy.' He made his visits, and was received as an academician under the title of the 'peintre des fêtes galantes.'"

The narrative by Gersaint of this incident is in some details more explicit :—

> "The singular manner in which he was admitted into the Academy is very honourable. He had some desire of going to Rome, to study there from the Great Masters, especially from the Venetian school, whose colour and composition he liked. He was not in a position to make this journey without assistance, and therefore wished to petition for the royal pension. With this object he resolved one day to have carried to the Royal Academy the two pictures that he had sold to my father-in-law, in order to try to get the pension. He sets out, with no other friends than his works, and has these exhibited in the room through which the gentlemen of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture generally pass. They all turn their eyes on the pictures, and admire the workmanship of them, without knowing the painter. M. de la Fosse, a celebrated painter of this date, stopped with the rest, and, astonished to see two pieces so well painted, he entered the Salle de l'Academie, and inquired by whom they had been done. These pictures had a vigorous colouring, and a certain harmony, which led them to be thought to be by an Old Master. He was told that they were the work of a young man, who was come there to pray these

gentlemen to intercede for him to get him the king's pension for Italy. De la Fosse orders him to be admitted, and Watteau appears. 'Sa figure n'est point imposante ; il explique modestement.' Finally De la Fosse dissuades him from his purpose of proceeding to Italy, saying, 'Nous vous trouvons capable d'honorer notre Académie ; faites les démarches nécessaires nous vous regardons comme un des nôtres. Il se retira, fit ses visites et fut agréé aussitot.'"

The following *procès* verbal is extracted in the 'Histoire des Peintres' from the registers of the Academy.

"The Academy, after taking the votes in the customary manner, has received the said Sieur Watteau as academician, to enjoy the privileges attached to this position (*qualité*), and he has promised ; taking an oath at the hands of M. Coypel, écuyer, first painter of the king, and of H. R. H. the Duke of Orleans, president being at the meeting. As to the 'present pecuniary,' it has been reduced (*modéré*) to the sum of 100 livres."

The above is a verbatim, though obviously ungrammatical, translation from the note in M. de Goncourt's work. It pretends to be a quotation from Gersaint. The 'Histoire des Peintres' referred to is not more closely specified, and there is no date given to the extract from the archives.

But if the above be correct, what is the meaning of the following from the "Chronological List of Admissions to the Academy of Painting and Sculpture. 28 August 1717." "Watteau, Antoine, peintre des fêtes galantes né à Valenciennes ; † 35 ans ; 18 Juillet 1721."[1] There is another entry as follows : "Wateau (Antoine), Peintre de genre, 28 Août 1717 : sur un tableau intitulé *l'embarquement pour l'ile de Cythère.* Musée du Louvre." M. de Caylus furnishes the explanation. Watteau, he says, was *five years* in finishing the picture required for his admission. M. de Caylus mentions this as an example of the indolence and instability of his disposition.

The sketch for this picture, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, engraved by Tardieu, is now in the Louvre, of which M. de Goncourt says—

[1] See 'Archives de l'Art Français,' tome i. 15 January, 1851.

"The sketch figures in the Louvre, under the number 469. I say the *sketch*, for the Louvre does not possess M. de Julienne's picture, engraved by Tardieu. In the engraving the composition is much more rich, more crowded with figures, accessories and details which grew under Watteau's pencil during the inspiration of work—successive details which, little by little, filled up the void of his first idea. In M. de Julienne's picture the great sail of the galley, which is not seen in the Louvre sketch, is filled up with a flight of Cupids, like a scattering of birds in the sky. And the Cupids continue their flight to the shadows of the woods, where they entangle the lovers in chains of roses. In Tardieu's engraving the distance is not closed by mountains, but extends into space over the sea, and the shore is beaten upon by the flow of a heavy sea. The pedestal and bust in the sketch are replaced by the statue of Venus Victrix taking out a dart from the quiver of one of the Amorini who are clambering up her pedestal. A buckler placed at the foot of the statue reflects in its mirror of steel the elegant group of the amorous shepherd offering flowers to his shepherdess, &c." . . .

The picture is in the "Elisabeth" room of the old castle at Berlin, in a state of perfect preservation, and has lost nothing of the freshness of its colour.

In the mean time Watteau's reputation, we are told, and the number of his admirers increased so rapidly, that he was glad to take refuge from the visits of the latter by accepting the proposal of M. Crozat that he should come and live with him in his celebrated house near the Rue Richelieu. M. Crozat invited him, in all probability at the instance of De la Fosse, to paint the decorations of an apartment, and Watteau very gladly accepted the offer, esteeming probably the advantages of study in the galleries of M. Crozat quite as much as the retirement from the invasion of his admirers.

In this house De la Fosse died in 1716, having resided there since 1707, when he finished the painting of the ceiling of the gallery. It is suggested that he may have made the acquaintance of Watteau there in 1712.

M. de Caylus, in his paper read at the Academy on February , 1748, enters into considerable detail of Watteau's mode of

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life between the period of his election and his entry into the house of M. de Crozat.[1] He describes how the honours he had gained drew upon him the troublesome attention of all the *demi-connoisseurs* and unoccupied crowd who frequented the studios of artists, and interrupted their work: a tenacious and troublesome crew, as M. de Caylus describes them, "aussi ardens à se produire que difficiles à congédier." They were followed or accompanied by the dealers and collectors who prey upon sketches and studies, and collect specimens of art at little or no expense.

> "Watteau was vigorously besieged by all these. He easily distinguished the two species of *bore*, understood them thoroughly, and took his revenge in painting the characters and manners of the most troublesome. But this lively painting did not console him for the annoyance which, in the end, nearly overwhelmed him. I have often seen him distressed by it to the point that he wished to throw up everything.
>
> "One would imagine that his brilliant successes in public would have been so flattering to his self-esteem as to raise him above these little incidents. But he was so constituted as to be nearly always disgusted with his own work. I think one of the strongest reasons for this was the grand ideas that he had of painting; for I can give assurance that he looked at art from a much higher standard than he practised it. This disposition rendered him generally very little prepossessed with his works. He cared no more for the price that he received for them, which was far lower than it should have been. He had no love for money."

M. de Caylus enlarges upon Watteau's inability to appreciate the marketable value of his own work, and tells an anecdote of a wig, with which Watteau was "enchanted," as a *chef-d'œuvre* of imitation of nature, for which he paid the perruquier with *two* of his pictures, and would have sent him a third, but for the intervention of De Caylus; and of another picture that he gave to a talkative critic, who boasted of his influence in the studios of Messieurs de Troy, De Largillière, and Rigaud, with the simple

[1] But he also says that it was in the same year of 1712 that he began his work for M. de Crozat!

object of getting him out of the room. The end of this story, however, throws a new light on the character of Watteau, for De Caylus having explained to him the character of the boaster in question, who went about depreciating the painters who had offended him, and claiming the merit of advising them in their work, Watteau took advantage of his request to retouch the picture he had given him, to wipe it out altogether from the panel before his eyes; and, says De Caylus, "he never appeared to enjoy the painting of any other picture as much as he enjoyed the effacement of this one."

"Enjoying an agreeable reputation, he had no other enemy than himself, and a certain evil spirit of instability by which he was dominated. No sooner was he settled in any lodging than he took a dislike to it. He changed hundreds of times, and always under some pretexts that he took all the pains in the world to make plausible. He settled best in some rooms that I had in different quarters of Paris, which we only used for posing the model and for painting and drawing in. In these places entirely consecrated to art, free from interruption, Watteau and I and a common friend,[1] who was animated by the same tastes, experienced the pure joy of youth combined with liveliness of imagination, both always united with the charm that attaches to painting. I may say that Watteau, everywhere else so gloomy, so hypochondriac, so timid, and so sarcastic, was then only the Watteau of his pictures; that is to say, the author suggested by them—agreeable, tender, and perhaps a little *berger*. In these retreats I learned to my profit how deeply Watteau reflected upon painting, and how far inferior his execution was to his ideas. In effect, having no knowledge of anatomy, having scarcely ever studied from the nude, he could neither read it nor express it. . . . This defect of practice in drawing debarred him from painting or composing any heroical or allegorical subject, or producing figures of a certain size. The *Four Seasons* that he painted in the salon of M. de Crozat are an instance of this. They are nearly half the size of nature, and although he executed them after sketches by M. de la Fosse, they contain so much mannerism and dryness that no good can be said of them."

M. de Goncourt, however, maintains that these arabesques

[1] No doubt M. Henin. See page 40.

were executed from original sketches by Watteau, which are now in his own possession, and not from De la Fosse's sketches; and the criticisms of M. de Caylus (which represent those in vogue in France for nearly a century after his time, and by which, no doubt, Watteau's singular exclusion from the national collections of the Louvre was influenced) are, now that Watteau's works are better known, generally reversed.

> "*Au fond*," he continues, "it must be admitted Watteau was *infiniment maniéré*. Although he was gifted with certain 'graces,' and seductive in his favourite subjects, his hands, his heads, even his landscape, are all marked with this defect. *Taste* and *effect* are his principal advantages, and these produce agreeable illusions, his colour being good and true to the expression of textures which are drawn 'd'une façon piquante.' It must be remarked, however, that nearly all his textures are silk, which falls in small folds. But his draperies were well put on and the arrangements of the folds was true, because he drew them always from the living model, and never from the lay-figure. The choice of local colours to his draperies was good, and never disturbed the harmony. Finally, his delicate and light touch gave to all of his execution a 'piquant' and lively effect. Of his power of rendering *expression* I can say nothing, for he never ventured the representation of any passion."

The house of M. Pierre de Crozat was built in 1704 upon a space of about nine roods, near the Rue Richelieu.

> "It consisted of a square building, of one story high, and attics in the roof, and looked on three sides over a charming landscape garden. The external decorations of the house were simple, but in good taste; they were the work of Cartault, a distinguished architect formerly in the service of the Duke de Berri. A prodigious collection of curiosities was the special attraction of the interior.
>
> "Two large apartments of the *rez-de-chaussée* were full of admirable pictures, and in one of these was a very beautiful antique statue of Bacchus, restored by François Flamand. These apartments led to a large gallery, which filled a whole side of the building and commanded a view of the garden. This is the first instance of such an arrangement, and its success was so great that it was often afterwards imitated in other buildings. The gallery was sixty feet in length, and twenty-two feet wide, and very beautifully proportioned, richly

decorated in a manly taste, and free from affectation or superfluity of ornament.

"The ceiling, which is painted with all imaginable skill, is one of the finest works of Charles de la Fosse, who finished it in 1707. It represents the birth of Minerva, and most admirable is the art with which the painter has taken advantage of the nature of the place that he had to paint; he has arranged his grouping so well; his sky is painted with such truth and harmony that the vault looks as if it were open to the air. The upper story is on the same plan, divided into two separate apartments. One of these was occupied by Charles de la Fosse, who died there in 1716, at the age of eighty, and (at the date of the description being written) his widow is living there still. The other apartment, which looks to the north, consists of a suite of rooms and a gallery lighted at each end. It is here that the amateur of painting and sculpture will find ample food for his curiosity. The master of the house has always taken pride in the possession of objects of beauty, and he has had the good fortune to see an infinite number of other famous collections pass successively into his own, making together the most ample collection of pictures, busts, bronzes, models of the most excellent sculptors, stones cut in relief, engravings, and especially drawings by the great masters, which their owner takes pleasure in exhibiting to the amateurs who visit him.

"The place in which he preserves his rarest treasures is an octagonal cabinet, lighted *à l'Italienne*, of the same arrangement as the famous saloon of the gallery of the Grand Duke at Florence, called the Tribune, which also contains so many precious objects. This cabinet is decorated all round with excellent sculpture in stucco, representing the genii of the arts, by Pierre le Gros."

The above description is taken verbatim from Brice ('Description de Paris de Germain Brice,' edition de 1752). He says of the garden mentioned above, that it was of great expanse, and commanded extremely varied views over a great extent of country.

The terrace above the orangery bordering the new avenue planted on the ramparts of the city was a most agreeable walk. The fruit garden, which was large and regular, was beyond the avenue, and was reached by a subterranean passage pierced at a great cost in the earth of the fortification. Two of Watteau's pictures contain views of M. Crozat's other garden at Montmorenci: one, *La Perspective*, engraved by Crespy le fils, from

the picture in the possession of M. Guénon, carpenter to the king; another, a drawing by Watteau, engraved by M. de Caylus. La Fosse finished the ceiling of the great gallery in 1707, and it was in 1712 that Watteau painted the fresco of the *Four Seasons* in the dining-hall, after La Fosse's sketches (*Caylus*).

M. de Caylus says that he and M. Henin were in the habit of bringing to Watteau, while he was with M. de Crozat, "an infinite number" of drawings from the studies of the best Flemish masters and the great Italian painters of landscape, in such a state of progress that he could get the effect of them "en y donnant quatre coups." This, he says, was what Watteau liked above all things—to achieve his result rapidly and without trouble.

> "The style of the 'petit' makes this easy. There a mere trifle produces or alters the expression. . . Watteau, in pursuit of rapidity of execution, liked painting *à gras*. This expedient has always had many advocates, and the greatest masters have employed it. But its success is dependent upon great and skilful preparations, and Watteau hardly ever made any. As a substitute for them he used, when he took up one of his pictures to finish, to rub it all over carelessly with *huile grasse*, and paint over that. This temporary advantage has caused serious damage to his pictures, increased by a certain want of cleanliness in his practice which has affected the 'constancy' of his colours. He seldom used to clean his palette, and often went several days without setting it. His pot of *huile grasse*, that he used so freely, was filled with dust and dirt, and mixed with all sorts of colours from the washings of his brushes. . . This want of care was the effect of Watteau's indolence, and of a certain impulse of vivacity given by the desire, or even the necessity, of throwing an idea rapidly on to the canvas. He had this impulse at times, but was much more frequently impelled to drawing. This occupation had an infinite attraction for him; and although generally the figures that he drew from nature had no definite purpose, he could not tear himself away from it. . . He never made a sketch or a 'pensée,' ever so slight, for any of his pictures. He used to make all his sketches or studies into a bound volume, so that he always had a large number ready to his hand. He had a collection of 'gallant' costumes, and a few comic,

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with which he used to dress up his models. . . When he wished to compose a picture he referred to his collection, selected the figures that suited him at the moment, and arranged them in groups, generally upon a background of landscape already composed. . . This method of composition is the cause of the uniformity, or monotony, of Watteau's pictures. . . With the exception of a few of his pictures, such as the *Accordée*, or the *Noce de Village*, *le Bal*, *l'Enseigne* (painted for M. Gersaint), and the *Embarquement de Cythère* (painted for his reception to the Academy, and since repeated), his compositions have no motive. They do not show the expressions of any passion, and are in consequence destitute of one of the most attractive parts of painting—I mean that of *action*."

M. Gersaint does not say how long Watteau's stay with M. Crozat lasted; his narrative on the subject is the following:—

"The favourable opportunity that he had of entering the house of M. Crozat was the more agreeable to him because he knew what great treasures of drawings this 'curieux' possessed. He profited by them eagerly, and had no other pleasures than that of perpetually examining, and even copying, all the pieces by the greatest painters.

"Love of liberty and independence led him at last to remove from M. de Crozat; he wished to live at his own pleasure, and indeed in obscurity. *He retired to the house of my father-in-law*,[1] where he had a small lodging, and absolutely forbad the discovery of his place of residence to any who should inquire for it."

Here again the available records leave a slight difficulty. M. d'Argenville gives us a different account. He says, Watteau found, in the house of the 'grand curieux' (M. de Crozat),

"A collection of pictures and drawings by the great masters, which finished his education (qui acheva de le perfectionner); and the influence of the study of so many beautiful things was remarked in his work. *He afterwards went to lodge with the Sieur Vleughels*,[2] a friend of his who died afterwards when he was the Director of the Academy of Rome."

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[1] M. Spoude.

[2] He was living with Vleughels in the house of the nephew of M. le Brun, on the moats (*fossez*) of the 'Doctrine Chrétienne,' when the idea of making his fortune induced him to cross over to London (*Gersaint*).

M. de Mariette mentions a portrait of Vleughels, engraved by Cars in the 'Recueil des figures de différents Caractères.' He does not indicate the figure, but De Goncourt supposes it to be one of a three-quarters face turned to the left, and wearing a nightcap.[1]

> "His success increased up to the year 1718, and would have been carried still farther, if his natural instability of character had not set limits to it."

It will be observed that each of these narratives contains, without mentioning it, the date of Watteau's final admission to the Academy and appointment to the office of "peintre du roi." M. Gersaint says—

> "Watteau was not puffed up with his new dignity, and the new *lustre* with which he had now been decorated. His desire to live in obscurity continued, and, far from overvaluing his own merit, he applied himself still more to study, and became still more dissatisfied with his work. I have often been a witness of his impatience, and the dislike he had for his own work. Sometimes I have seen him entirely wipe out finished pictures which displeased him for some fault that he found in them, and that in spite of my offer of a fair price. On one occasion I snatched one out of his hands in spite of himself, to his great mortification.
>
> "From *this time* (1717 ?) until the date of his voyage to England, in 1720, the instability (*légèreté*) of his character impelled him to frequent changes of residence; never pleased for long with places which he had chosen for himself, 'et qu'il avait désiré avec ardeur.'"

Referring to this part of his life, and throwing perhaps as much light upon its history as a great number of dry facts, are the following letters. They were published in the 'Archives de l'Art Francais,' in 1855. They were communicated by the Baron Rothschild, at that time Minister in England for the King of Sweden and Norway.

M. de Chennevières edits them with the remarks: "All Watteau is there, with his heart, with his works, with the

[1] *Comédiens François*, No. 64 in the 'Œuvre' of De Goncourt.

habits of his life and his labour, and even to the failings of his poor health. And what a delicious enthusiasm he has for Rubens, of whom, with Van Dyck, he is the most brilliant pupil! Did you see, in the great salon of the Louvre, in 1848, the *Voyage à Cythère* by the side of the *Kermesse?* Did the *chef-d'œuvre* of the master eclipse that of Watteau?"

À Monsieur Gersaint, Md., sur le Pont Notre Dame, de la part de Watteau.

Du Samedi.

[1] Mon ami Gersaint,

Oui, comme tu le désires, je me rendrai demain à diner avec Antoine de la Roque, chez toi. Je compte aller à la messe à dix heures à St. Germain de Lauxerrois; et assurément je seroi rendu chez toi à midi, car je n'auroi avant qu'une seule visite à faire à l'ami Molinet qui a un peu de pourpre depuis quinze jours.

En attendt, ton amy,

A. Watteau.

À Mr. Monsieur de Julienne, de la part de Watteau par exprès.

De Paris, le 3 de Mai.

[1] Monsieur!

Je vous fais le retour du grand tome premier de l'Ecrit de Léonardo de Vincy, et en mesmes temps je vous en fais agréer mes sincères remerciements. Quand aux Lettres en manuscrit de P. Rubens, je les garderai encore devers moi si cela ne vous est pas trop désagréable en ce que je ne les ai pas encore achevées!! Cette douleur au coté gauche de la tête ne m'a pas laissé sommeiller depuis mardi et Mariotti veut me faire prendre une purge des demain au jour, il dit que la grande chaleur qu'il fait l'aidera à souhait. Vous me rendrez satisfait au dela de mon souhait, si vous venez me rendre visite d'içi à dimanche; je vous montrerai quelques bagatelles comme les païsages de Nogent que vous estimez assez par cette raison que j'en fis les pensées en présence de Madame de Julienne à qui je baise les mains très-respectueusement.

Je ne fais pas ce que je veux en ce que la pierre grise et la pierre de sanguine sont fort dures en ce moment, je n'en puis avoir d'autres.

A. Watteau.

[1] *See Translation in Appendix, p.* 81.

À Mr. Monsieur de Julienne de la part de W.

De Paris, le 3 de Septembre.

Monsieur !

Par le retour de Marin qui m'a apporté la venaison qu'il vous a pleu m'envoier des le matin, je vous adresse la Toile où j'ai peinte la teste du sanglier et la teste du renard noir, et vous pourrez les dépêcher vers Mr. de Losmesnil, car j'en ai fini pour le moment. Je ne puis m'en cacher mais cette grande toile me rejouist et j'en attends quelque retour de satisfaction de vostre part, et de celle de Madame de Julienne qui aime aussi infiniment ce sujet de la chasse, comme moi-mesme. Il a fallu que Gersaint m'ammenat le bon homme la Serre pour agrandir la toile du costé droit, ou j'ai ajousté les chevaux dessous les arbres, car j'y eprouvois de la gesne depuys que j'y ay ajousté tout ce qui a esté décidé ainsi.

Je pense reprendre ce costé la des lundi à midi passé, parceque des le matin jè m'occupe des pensées à la sanguine. Je vous prie ne pas m'oublier anvers Madame de Julienne à qui je baise les mains.

A. Watteau.

À M. Mon Sieur de Julienne.

Monsieur !

Il a pleu à Mon Sieur l'Abbé de Noirterre de me faire l'envoi de cette toile de P. Rubens où il y a les deux testes d'anges, et au dessous sur le nuage cette figure de femme plongée dans la contemplation. Rien n'aurait seu me rendre plus heureux assurément si je ne restois persuadé que c'est par l'amitié qu'il a pour vous et pour Mr. vôtre neveu, que Monsieur de Noirterre se dessaisit en ma faveur d'une aussi rare peinture que celle-la.

Depuis ce moment où je l'ai reçue, jè ne puis rester en repos, et mes yeux ne se lassent pas de se retourner vers le pupitre ou je l'ai placée comme dessus un tabernacle ! ! On ne saurait se persuader facilement que P. Rubens aie jamais rien fait de plus achevé que cette Toile. Il vous plairra, Monsieur, d'en faire agréer mes véritables remerçimens à Monsieur l'abbé de Noirterre jusques à ce que je puisse les lui adresser par moy-mesme. Je prendrai le moment du messager d'Orléans prochain, pour lui escrire et luy envoïer le tableau du repos de la S^te^ famille que je luy destine en reconnoissance.[1]

Votre bien attaché amy et serviteur, Monsieur ! !

A. Watteau.

[1] See page 61.

M. de Caylus, in spite of his severe criticism of Watteau's indolence and restless instability of purpose, competes with Gersaint in professions of the friendship that he entertained for him, and the remonstrances he addressed him on the subject of his ruinous disregard of his interests in the affairs of life.

> "I saw with real pain that he was continually the dupe of everybody round him; and the more to be pitied because he had sense enough to appreciate this, whilst his feebleness carried him onwards; finally, that the delicacy of his constitution increased from day to day. . . I represented to him, besides all this, that he had good friends, but that knowledge of the world taught how little reliance is to be placed upon them when adversity arrives. I added that those of his friends who were more highly-minded were still liable to death. I used every argument that his position supplied, only too abundantly, to my friendship. I rested these arguments even upon his own love of independence, with which Nature appeared to have endowed him, and which, in general, is the pleasant accompaniment of genius. . . To all this fine sermon I received no answer but this, with a personal expression of thanks:—'Le pis-aller, n'est ce pas l'hôpital? On n'y refuse personne.'"

We can hardly believe that Watteau, however careless he might be, was serious when he made this last speech. Another interpretation of it might be found in the supposition that he had some reliance upon the force of his genius, and scarcely took into serious consideration the extremity suggested in the worldly-wise sermon of his friend. He was shrewd enough to know that between him and the refuge for the destitute that he named, there lay, had health and strength been granted him, the possibilities of eminence and wealth. All is conjecture in his history; but his journey, almost we may call it his *flight*, into England has the air of an escape from surroundings where, as M. de Caylus says, he was, in his indolent generosity of disposition, the dupe of everybody; to a fresh field of enterprise, where, shaking off at the same time the men who cozened him and those who patronized him, he could indulge in his own way that love of independence with which, as M. de Caylus says, "Nature appeared to have endowed him."

CHAPTER III.

1719—1721.

VISIT TO ENGLAND—RETURN TO FRANCE, AND DEATH.

IN the previous chapter I have followed, with such precision as the records at my disposal permitted, the eleven years of Watteau's comparative prosperity, the principal cloud upon which appears to have been the nervous restlessness and the natural melancholy of his temperament. Gratifying in the first instance, and with the first gleam of hope inspired by his gain of the Academic prize, his longing for liberty (for I do not adopt the narrative of M. de Caylus, which would place the date of his visit to Valenciennes before the incident of his gaining the Academic prize), he hastens home, not, as he might have dreaded in the days of the Pont Notre Dame, a broken penitent, but flushed with his first success in life, and full of confidence in his power. The little incident of the price of the second picture that he sold to M. Spoude, two hundred lire, instead of the sixty that he had received for its pendant, shows that he was already feeling firm ground under him. His residence with M. Crozat must have been one long enjoyment, and, in respect of its influence on his art, a continuation of his experiences in the Luxembourg. Again he found himself domiciled in the midst of the works of the great masters, and his leisure hours were spent among gardens still more beautiful and more highly cultivated than those of the Luxembourg. In his solitude and retirement among these beautiful scenes he

found the fairy-land inspirations that he transmitted to his canvases. "Le milieu explique l'homme," says Diderot; the festivals at Valenciennes, the opera at Paris, and the clipped and cultivated gardens at Montmorenci, all mingle in his paintings. A striking feature in his character is his failure to realize the extent of his own success, or to grasp the rewards that lay at his feet. He was impelled by his temperament rather to seek obscurity and solitude, in which to indulge the dreams that a closer contact with the world might have converted into nobler appreciations of realities.

No man leading such a life can live long, or happily. Incessant concentration of thought on one subject, and that mostly the phantasy of his own invention, is distinctly unhealthy; and accordingly we find him with ruined health in what should have been the prime of his life. The pitifulness of his story is, however, wonderfully relieved by the glimpse into his friendships and his piety of disposition to be got in the few letters printed at the end of the last chapter. His life was not altogether solitary, we see, and his friends were sympathetic. It would be extremely interesting to discover more of such correspondence. The story is full of broken links, but here and there the gaps may be bridged over without any over-daring exercise of the imagination.

His quiet amusements with his friend M. de Julienne have a record in a picture, of which the engraving is mentioned by M. de Goncourt. It represents a scene of country, with Watteau occupied in painting, and M. de Julienne playing on the violoncello. Underneath the picture is the following inscription, probably from the pen of M. de Julienne:—

"Assis auprès de toy sous ces charmants Ombrages
Du temps, mon cher Watteau, je crains peu les outrages.
Trop heureux si les traits d'un fidèle Burin
En multipliant tes ouvrages,
Instruisaient l'Univers des sincères hommages
Que je rends à ton Art divin."

A still more interesting illustration of the same subject is the picture called *La Conversation*, of which De Goncourt says—

> "The composition called *La Conversation*, with its freedom from poetical conventionality, its costumes of the period, and its tone of contemporary reality, is beyond dispute a representation of M. de Julienne's society. The honorary member of the Academy of Painting is recognized in the 'causeur à la grande perruque' seated on the right hand. Watteau—the same Watteau, 'longuet et maigriot,' whom we see in the *Shipwreck*—is easily identified standing upright in the centre of the composition. . . A study for the head of the negro who is handing round refreshments is in the British Museum."

We have seen enough of M. de Gersaint, and even of M. de Caylus, to understand that, even if there were no stronger motive, a restless dislike of the restraint of their incessant patronage and advice might well have been an impulse to Watteau to take a holiday, even from them. His friendship with M. de Julienne appears in a pleasanter light of assumed equality, and a more genial form of intercourse. Watteau, moreover, had begun life with a long apprenticeship to servitude and injustice. The selfish "exploitation" of which Gillot and Audran had made him the victim may well have left him inclined to be suspicious even of "L'ami Gersaint" and his accommodating father-in-law. He had also, as M. de Caylus explains, passed through a time of independence and comparative fame, and found his life made insupportable by the calculated assiduities of his flatterers.

The criticisms and the narrative of De Caylus lead to the reflection that it was an evil inspiration of M. de la Fosse that led him to dissuade Watteau from his purpose of studying at Rome. He seems to have felt henceforth a disgust at the dedication of his talents to the Trivial in art, while his health, which the climate of Italy might have re-established, broken probably by the hardships of his long probation, was too feeble for his energy, and he sank into comparative indolence, out of which his genius flickered with an uncertain light, feeble in

M. DE JULIENNE.

comparison with what it might have been, as that of his pictures is to the brightness of the skies of Italy.

M. de Caylus passes rapidly over the subject of Watteau's residence in England :—

> "His natural restlessness having impelled him to leave M. Vleughels, he did nothing but wander from place to place, making fresh acquaintances. Among these, as his misfortune would have it, were some who exaggerated the advantages of residence in England with that foolish enthusiasm which we find in many people who have never made a voyage. He wanted no more than this to turn to that country his incessant desire for change. He set out in 1719, arrived at London, worked there, but was very soon displeased with the melancholy life that, being a foreigner ignorant of the language, he was forced to lead there. However, Frenchman though he was, he was well enough received, and studied the practical side of his affairs. But at the end of a year the fogs and the coal-smoke that one breathes for air in that country injured the health which even a purer air would not have preserved to us for long, for even before the voyage his lungs were affected. He therefore returned to France, and to Paris."

All other notices of his life pass over his visit to this country with similar brevity. Gersaint says :

> "He was very hard at work during his residence in England ; his works were much run after there, and were well paid. It is there that he first began to acquire a taste for money, which he had previously despised. . . The bad air which prevails in London from the vapour of the coals that are burned in that country is very injurious to those who are affected in the lungs ; but he was so severely attacked by the disease which is there called 'La consomption,' that he has ever afterwards dragged out a languishing life, which by insensible degrees brought him to his grave."

He placed his health in the care of the eminent Dr. Richard Mead, the physician to King George II., "who advised him" (Allan Cunningham records) "to study less and amuse himself more ; and, in order to keep him from sinking into poverty, for Watteau was never rich, he commissioned from him a couple of pictures, leaving the subjects to his own taste."

One of these pictures, painted for Dr. Mead, was the *Italian Comedians*, engraved by Baron, mentioned in a 'Catalogue of the genuine and capital collection of pictures, by the most celebrated masters, of that late great and learned physician Doctor Richard Mead,' sold at Langford's March, 23 March, 1754, for 50 guineas. Another, *L'Amour paisible*, sold on the previous day for £42. It is described as 102 of the 'Œuvre,' on p. 27.

The king, at the recommendation of Dr. Mead, also gave him a commission for the four pictures which are now at Buckingham Palace, described on p. 77.

There is an interesting proof engraving in the British Museum (mentioned by M. de Goncourt) of a family group painted by Watteau during his residence in London: of a miniature painter of the time, named Pierre Mercier, with his wife and children. Watteau's friend stands on the left of the picture, and in front of him a little girl is riding on a wooden hobby-horse, her little brother holding her up. Mercier's wife stands in the centre of the picture, with the painter's tobacco-pipe in her hand; and a little girl is playing with a racket by herself in a corner.

"Change of air," says Cunningham, "or rather change of scene, made him look up a little. He felt, however, that 'Death was with him dealing,' and returning to Paris, sickened and died in the thirty-seventh year of his age."

A curious instance of the uncertainty that exists as to the facts of his history arises in connection with a portrait of the sculptor Antoine Pater, the father of his pupil. M. de Goncourt mentions that this portrait is now in the possession of M. Bertin of Valenciennes, a descendant of the Pater family. It is one of the rare specimens of Watteau's portraits in oil, which the critic is disposed to allow to be authentic. It is a half-length portrait, and on the head a "vaste perruque blonde aux ombres fauves." M. Cellier says that the colouring of this portrait is as powerful as that of a Rembrandt, and that the head of M. Pater appears in several of Watteau's other pictures. He also

maintains that it was painted, *after* Watteau's return from England, during a visit that he paid to Valenciennes, which is not mentioned by any of his biographers. M. Léon Dumont adopts this hypothesis; he says of the picture—

> "This beautiful canvas is calculated to overthrow the theories of those who assert that Watteau could not diverge from his usual subjects. We recognize at once the touch of a great master, and think of Rembrandt and the magic day that illuminates his figures. The countenance is full of expression, especially the forehead; the eyes and the root of the nose are remarkable. It is altogether in the painter's final style. The work was evidently done very rapidly, and at the same time with the facility that springs from an extraordinary degree of firmness and precision. It is curious to inquire into the circumstances of its production. If we may believe the family traditions, Antoine Pater never left his native place: a voyage to Paris was a great undertaking two hundred years ago. The picture must, therefore, have been painted at Valenciennes. We know that Watteau passed some months there at the age of twenty-three; but he was, at that time, far from being able to paint like this, and Pater would then have been scarcely forty years of age, whilst his portrait is that of a man of fifty. It is necessary, therefore, to admit a second visit, of which the biographers have lost sight. M. Cellier makes an ingenious suggestion: the journey of the painter to England is assigned to the second year before his death. Now Valenciennes is on the high road from Paris to London. Watteau, who loved his own country, who had dedicated to the pleasure of a visit there the price of his first picture, who in his last moments formed the wish to die there, did not return to the north of France without first reposing, a few days at least, among his family and friends. M. Bertin remembers a portrait of the wife of Pater, which by a variety of accidents has been finally completely destroyed."

On his return to Paris, Watteau took up his residence again with L'Ami Gersaint, and the first work that he did was to paint a *sign-board* for the shop of that enterprising dealer, "to keep his fingers warm" (pour se dégourdir les doigts). This "plafond," as the sign-boards were then called, produced a sensation in the quarter. "The whole of it," says Gersaint,

"Was painted from nature; the attitudes in it were so easy, the composition so natural, that it attracted the eyes of all the passers-by; and even the most skilful painters came several times to admire it. It was the work of eight days, Watteau only working in the mornings, by reason of the delicacy of his health and his weakness, &c."

M. de Gersaint's signboard was engraved by P. Aveline, and formed part of the collection of M. de Julienne. It would appear that Watteau attempted to reproduce in the work, which represented a dealer packing up his pictures, the various styles of the painters of the day.

"Watteau, dans cette enseigne, à la fleur de ses ans,
Des Maistres de son Art Imite la manière,
Leurs caractères différens;
Leurs touches et leur gout composent la matière."

M. Léon Dumont says of this picture that it is wonderful for its accumulated details. It represents—

"A long gallery, the walls of which are covered with pictures of all sizes, and of all schools of art. The styles of the various masters are reproduced with such accuracy that they are recognized at the first glance. The shop is full of visitors and customers, who are looking over the canvases, or busy driving bargains. The painter has neglected nothing that could add variety to the scene; he has not even forgotten the house-dog."

M. de Goncourt's account of his discovery of this picture is interesting. It is now, he says, in the "Elisabeth" or "Red Room," of the old palace at Berlin.

In the month of February, 1721, Watteau, at the request of M. de Crozat, sat for his portrait to a Venetian lady, Rosalba Carriera; and painted in revenge at the same time a charming portrait of herself holding a lapful of white roses in two hands, and inscribed *Rosa Alba*. The engraving of this portrait has some lines beneath it, beginning, "La plus belle des fleurs ne dure qu'un matin,"[1] a motto that she might with too sad a truth

[1] Goncourt, 'Œuvre.'

have retorted upon poor Watteau himself. Rosalba was of as melancholy a disposition as Watteau. She made a portrait of herself crowned with a faded wreath, and called the picture the tragedy of her life, and the token of her mournful death. The diary of her visit to France has been published under the title 'Diario degli anni 1720 et 21, scritto da Ros. Carriera.' Venice, 1793, 4to. There are one hundred and fifty-seven specimens of her work in the Dresden Gallery (*Nagler*).

He remained with M. de Gersaint six months, the decline of his health obviously progressing, and the restlessness and desire for change, which are the common accompaniment to such a condition, gaining upon him.

Neither of the biographers appears to have considered, in the preparation of his narrative, the interest that would have been added to it by the recapitulation of the works painted under the circumstances that they describe, and there are very few of Watteau's paintings to which it is possible to assign a precise date.

Materials must, however, exist somewhere which would amplify in an interesting manner this investigation. Their disappearance for a century is significant of the neglect that fell upon Watteau's memory in France during that period. To return to Gersaint's narrative: he continues it:—

> "The languor that oppressed him at this time, from his delicate and worn-out health, led him to think that he would be incommoding me, after six months, if he continued to stay at my house. He explained this, and begged me to find him a suitable lodging. It would have been useless for me to resist. He was self-willed, and brooked no reply. I therefore did as he wished, but he did not remain long in his new lodgings. His malady increased; his restlessness redoubled; he thought that he would be much better in the country. He became impatient, and finally was tranquillized by the information that M. Le Febvre, then 'Intendant des Menus,' had allotted him a retreat in his house at Nogent, above Vincennes; at the solicitation of his friend, the late Abbé Haranger, Canon of S. Germain l'Auxerrois, I took him there, and went over to see him and console him every two or three days."

Watteau's friend, the Abbé Haranger, was, at the date of M. de Caylus's address, an honorary member of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture. He was probably, therefore, attracted to Watteau by his attachment to art, and not merely in his religious duties.[1] M. Le Febvre was also an honorary member of the Academy.

Poor Watteau carried his malady and his unrest with him. *Cœlum non animam mutant*—

> "The longing for change tormented him afresh ; he thought he might conquer this malady by returning to his native air. He communicated his idea to me, and begged me to make an inventory of the little property that he had, and to sell it. It produced about 3000 livres, of which he made me the trustee. This was the whole fruit of his labours, with 6000 livres which M. de Julienne had saved for him from the wreck at the time that he set out for England, and which were restored to *his family* after his death, together with the 3000 livres in my hands" (*Gersaint*).

This paragraph is pregnant with tantalizing partial revelations of incidents that would have added to the interest of this history. It tells us that at the date of his departure for England some catastrophe of Watteau's fortunes, which Gersaint calls "le Naufrage," happened, from which M. de Julienne had saved 6000 livres for Watteau. It appears that he kept these livres as a trustee, as Gersaint did—as if Watteau were incapable of looking after his own affairs at all. Then there is the mention of his *family*, of whom we have heard nothing before. M. de Gersaint does not mention who it was that constituted this family—father and mother, or even wife and children! The whole history is involved in obscurity.

Watteau appears, in spite of his deadly illness of mind and body, to have continued assiduously at work during the last

[1] S. Germain l'Auxerrois is the church mentioned in Watteau's letter to Gersaint (quoted in the previous chapter) as that where he was in the habit of attending mass. The chapter of S. Germain, when valued in 1770, was composed of a dean, with 8000 livres revenue, of a "dignité de Chantre," and twelve canons at 1500 livres apiece.

days of his life; principally in instruction of his pupil Pater, who said in after years that he owed all that he inherited of Watteau to these parting lessons; but many of Watteau's own works are also attributed to this period; and of these are satirical and humorous subjects. Of the former we have, attributed to this date, *The Doctor* (described on p. 60), and M. Dinaux narrates the circumstance of his making a number of portrait sketches of his spiritual adviser, the reverend curate of Nogent, who "was as jovial and gay a man as the painter was the contrary, and had one of those figures of prosperity which are not uncommon in the Church," in the character of *Pierrot* or *Gilles.*

> "This peccadillo," we are told, "weighed on the conscience of Watteau. In his last moments he asked the curate's pardon for thus abusing his features. The good pastor, in granting it, presented him, according to the custom, with a crucifix to kiss. The image must have been very badly executed, for Watteau cried out, 'Take away that crucifix; how could an artist dare to portray so grossly the features of a God!'"

Gersaint only says that while the poor dying Watteau was hoping from day to day to recover strength to return and die at home, "his decline became more and more rapid, and suddenly succumbing, he died in my arms at Nogent, on the 18th of July, 1721, at the age of thirty-seven."

M. Bürger[1] has discovered in a *Joueur de basse* of Lancret, which was exhibited by its owner, M. Burat, at the Paris collection in 1860, a portrait of Watteau—in a very simple brown costume, a powdered wig; free from caprice or eccentricity, &c.; the head a little inclined to one side, like the attitude of a musician listening to his own performance; the face a little wrinkled, and the expression melancholy; a "drole de nez," *bevilled* at the point. "How like it is to Watteau! and of a certainty it is he." Lancret must have painted him during the

[1] 'Gaz. des Beaux Arts,' T. 7, p. 275.

time when they were friends, before a sort of very superficial rivalry had divided them, say about 1715. The basso-player looks about thirty years old, which would do for Watteau at that date.

"Watteau," says Gersaint, "was a man of average stature, and constitutionally feeble; in disposition restless and changeable, strong willed, libertine by inclination but steady of life, impatient, timid, cold and embarrassed, reserved and cautious with strangers; a good friend, but hard to please; misanthropical, and a malicious and sharp critic, always discontented with himself and others; unready to forgive; he spoke little, but well; he was very fond of reading, which was the only amusement he allowed himself in his leisure; although not highly educated, he had a good judgment of works of intellect. There, as far as I have been able to study him, you have his life-portrait. No doubt his continual devotion to work, the delicacy of his constitution, and the great sorrows with which his life was chequered, made him irritable, and influenced the social faults which he was subject to."

STUDY OF A GIRL'S HEAD.

CHAPTER IV.

WORKS.

WATTEAU'S ENGRAVED AND OTHER WORK—CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL REMARKS.

THE catalogues of Watteau's pictures by M. Edmond de Goncourt and other authors are all based upon the collection of engravings prepared by M. de Julienne.[1] It is unfortunate that these catalogues deal rather with the interest of the merchant and collector than the student, and, bestowing infinite pains in tracing out the story of the successive transfers of each work, the prices that it fetched, its measurement in inches, and the copies or engravings of it that exist, say only a word here and there of the far more interesting subjects of its date and history, and the circumstances under which it came into existence.

M. de Goncourt's lists commence with that of the ETCHINGS by Watteau's own hand, which I have not space to detail. They are confessedly bad works of art, however valuable as "curiosities."

[1] "L'œuvre d'Antoine Watteau, peintre du Roy en son Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture: Gravé d'âprès ses Tableaux et Desseins Originaux, tirez du Cabinet du Roy et des plus curieux de l'Europe par les soins de M. de Julienne à Paris." A hundred copies were printed of this collection, of which one is to be seen in the Print Room of the British Museum.

He next gives a list of PORTRAITS, beginning with our frontispiece, and other portraits of Watteau, painted by the artist himself. Those of *M. de Julienne and Watteau* (14), and of *The painter Mercier and his family* (15), in London, I have mentioned in their places.[1] These are followed by portraits of *M. J. B. Rebel* (16), musician to the king, "dessiné par Watteau son ami;" and the *Retour de Chasse* (18), mentioned below; the *Rosalba*[2] (19), of February 1721; *Vleughels*,[3] and others which have not been engraved.

M. de Crozat was in the habit of giving concerts, and one of these is reproduced in a crayon drawing of Watteau, now in the collection of the Louvre, with portraits of three musicians—Antoine, a flute-player, and an Italian, Paccini, and a lady of the name of D'Argenon, singers. These individuals are described in a marginal note on the drawing as three *virtuosi* of the Crozat concerts.

M. Sirois, the brother-in-law of M. Gersaint, figures in the Italian concert.

> "Sous un habit de Mezetin
> Ce gros brun au riant visage."

M. de Mariette says, "This 'gros brun au riant visage' is Watteau's friend, the Sieur Sirois, playing the guitar in the midst of his family, in the character of Mezetin" (see 'Figures Françoises et Contemporaines').

There were two friends of this name, father and son, and the son had daughters, of one of whom there is a portrait in a piece called the *Retour de Chasse*, which was painted by Watteau on his return from Flanders, when he was living with M. Sirois *père*. This lady, represented in a hunting costume, has been generally thought to be Madame de Vermanton, a niece of M. de Julienne. A portrait of Madame de Julienne appears in La Famille. Waagen mentions among the collection of H. A. J. Munro, Esq., *Portraits of two young children*—life-

[1] Pages 47, 50. [2] Page 51. [3] Page 42.

size—"A picture of the utmost attraction for the *naïveté* and truth of conception, and the delicate and transparent colouring."

A more important section is the SATIRICAL and ALLEGORICAL WORKS; the first two, *Painting* and *Sculpture*, being *singeries*. The latter is said to be at present in the Orleans Museum. "*Les singes peintres*—is a small picture on copper, in the gallery of the Palais Royal, where it hangs as a pendant to the *Musique des Chats* of Breughel."—*Gersaint.* Then (22)[1] *Le Dejeuner*, another ape subject; (23) *Départ pour les Isles* is an important composition. (24) *Le Naufrage.* An engraving by Caylus is extant of this composition, which Wattcau painted in commemoration of the unpleasant sea-journey that he had on his return from England; and perhaps, M. de Goncourt suggests, with allusion to the fund of 6000 livres which M. de Julienne had saved for him out of the *shipwreck* of his affairs, when he set out on his journey (see p. 54).

Among the satirical works may be mentioned also the picture called (25) *The Doctor;* the original sketch of which, representing the sick man in night-cap and dressing-gown, flying for his life, pursued by two apothecaries, is said to be in Russia, in the Lyceum of the palace of Tsarskoe-Sélo. The engraving, by Caylus, has some of the usual rough poetry under it, beginning—

> "Qu'ay-je fait, assassins maudits,
> Pour m'attirer vôtre colère?" &c.

This is not to be confounded with the other caricature of (26) *Doctor Misaubin*, whom M. de Mariette describes as a French surgeon who had taken refuge in England, and a vendor of certain infallible pills that he had invented. He is represented holding in his hand a three-cornered hat of the period, with long crape streamers attached; and all around him ghastly death's-heads, tombs, and sarcophagi. The picture was engraved in 1739

[1] In referring to pictures mentioned by M. de Goncourt, I adopt his numbers for convenience of reference.

by Arthur Pond, with the legend "*Prenez des Pillules!* prenez des pillules!"

A picture in the Lacaze collection of a similar subject, or rather a combination of the two subjects above, is attributed (along with another representing a juggler performing at a table) to the earliest period of Watteau.

> "The scene takes place in a cemetery; an invalid in a dressing-gown is flying before the faculty, and finds no other refuge than the grave from the apothecaries and their *artillery*. Watteau's doctors are a repetition of the doctors of Molière and Regnard. Certain biographers, naturally associating the ideas of doctors with those of death and sickness, have considered it clever to make the artist paint this picture in his last moments, and to regard it as a joke *in extremis*. But it is impossible to admit this; the work carries its date in the method of its execution. These critics fall into the error of the historian who romances from his imagination."

(27) A satirical piece entitled, "Ce manant de Dandin n'est par ma foi, pas bête."

The ALLEGORICAL paintings of *The Four Seasons* for the dining-hall of M. de Crozat's house (painted about the year 1712) were upon oval canvases of 4 ft. 9 in. high, by 3 ft. 9 in. broad. M. de Caylus says that they were after designs of La Fosse. "Caylus," says M. de Goncourt, "is mistaken; I possess the original sketches of the *Spring* and *Autumn*." The *Summer* and *Winter* were sold from the estate of the Duc de Choiseul in 1786, and again, at the Lebrun sale, in 1791, for 140 livres. Other four seasons (on canvases 1 ft. 5 in. by 1 ft. 8 in.) were among M. de Julienne's collections.

The next section contains the RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

Of Watteau's works upon religious subjects, M. de Goncourt supposes that the greater number have been lost sight of and never engraved. He mentions among the engraved work, *David receiving Divine Inspiration* (28), a composition which Mariette says was executed for the edition of the Psalms by Calmet; a picture called *The Penitent* (29), in the collection of M. de

Julienne; *Tobias burying the Dead* (30); a *Holy Family* (31), which went to Russia, and has been frequently copied or repeated; and first among those which have escaped engraving, *The Crucifixion*, which he painted on his deathbed for the curé of Nogent. The original title of this picture was *Christ on the Cross, surrounded by Angels.* Many others are mentioned,[1] and finally Hécart says, in his biographies, that he had seen a Watteau "une merveille": *The sleep of the Infant Jesus, and the little Saint John awakening Him by blowing upon a horn.* This picture, says Hécart, was destroyed by a bombshell during the bombardment of Valenciennes in 1793.

> "The flesh tints had the freshness of the rose. The child Jesus was buried in sleep; two angel heads appeared from a cloud above and contemplated Him. S. Joseph was placed at the head of the cradle, the Virgin on the right. S. John Baptist was holding a small trumpet of black horn, which was partly concealed by his little hand. Impatient to play with the infant Jesus, he put it to his mouth; and you could see by the inflation of his cheeks that he was sounding it to awaken his little companion; but the Virgin, noticing this, holds up a finger, and seems to be saying, 'He must not be disturbed.'"

The next section, of MYTHOLOGICAL SUBJECTS, contains—(32) *Acis and Galatea*, "imitating," we are told, "the landscapes of Forest"; (33) *L'amour désarmé;* (34) *L'amour mal accompagné;* (35) *Les Amusements de Cythère;* (36) *Diana at the Bath;* (37) *The Children of Bacchus;* (38) *The Children of Silenus*, which bears an alias of *Jeu d'enfants;* (39) *The Rape of Europa;* (40) *Fêtes of the god Pan;* (41) *Pomona.* M. de Mariette says that this picture was for a long time used as a sign-board to a painter's shop in the Pont Notre-Dame. (42) The *Sommeil Dangereux*, alias *Antiope surprised by Jupiter in the form of a Satyr;* (43) *The Triumph of Ceres;* (44) *The Triumph of Venus*, mentioned by Waagen in Mr. Neeld's collection as "sketchily, but cleverly executed in his most

[1] See p. 44, where the picture for the Abbé de Noirterre is mentioned: *Le Repos de la Sainte Famille.*

transparent colouring; (45) *Venus and Love;* (46—49) *The Four Seasons*[1]; and a number of similar compositions not engraved, including three which are now in the La Caze collection in the Louvre, viz.: *The Judgment of Paris*, and *Autumn* (sketches), and *Jupiter and Antiope.*

M. de Goncourt's next section, of HISTORICAL SUBJECTS, mentions only an historical picture from the collection of M. de Julienne, representing Louis XIV. investing Monsieur de Bourgoyne, the father of Louis XV., with the *Cordon bleu.* Mariette, in his 'Abecedario,' says that Watteau painted this picture for M. Dieu, who had undertaken to prepare a series of designs of the great actions of the life of the king, for reproduction in tapestry work—a plan that was, however, ultimately abandoned.

MILITARY SCENES.—(51) *Halt of a Detachment.* (52) *Camp Volant.* This is the picture (mentioned on p. 31) which he painted for Sirois, during his first visit to Valenciennes in 1709, as a pendant to the *Départ de Garnison* (mentioned on p. 26); (53) *Return from the Campaign.* (54) *Les fatigues de la Guerre;* (55) *Les délassements de la Guerre.* These two pictures are described by Gersaint as the most "piquants" that Watteau ever painted. (56) *Escorte d'equipages.* Mariette calls this picture "merveilleux." (57) *A Halt;* (58) *Défilé;* (59) *Départ de Garnison*—represents a departing troop; a line of troops passing beneath a large vault with horses, and in the foreground several soldiers and others taking farewell.[2] (60) *The Pillage of a Village;* (61) *The Revenge of the Peasants;* (62) *The Vivandière.* Others are mentioned which have not been engraved.

THEATRICAL SCENES.—(63) *The Alliance of Music and Comedy;* (64) *Comédiens François;* (65) *L'Amour au Théatre Français;* in the Berlin Museum; (66) *Spectacle François*—a landscape with comedians; (67) *Adonis*—"In a park, a dancer upright, holding a rose; on the right four nymphs reclining under a bust of Pan; on the left, on a bench, a Leander making a declaration

[1] Mentioned on pp. 37, 60. [2] Mentioned on p. 26.

to an Isabelle, surprised by Crispin." (68) *Comédiens Italiens;* or *Les Artistes de la Comédie Italienne.* A picture exhibited by M. James de Rothschild, at the exhibition of 1860. Pierrot and the Doctor; Sylvia, Columbine, and Leander. One holds a mandoline. The figures are not of the best quality, but the upper part of the picture represents a luminous sky, among groups of branching trees, which M. Bürger says is "very full of poetry, and fortunately in good preservation."

(69) *L'Amour au Théatre Italien.* This picture, now at the Berlin Museum, and its pendant, No. 65, are described by Dr. R. Dohme as in almost perfect preservation—the best Watteaus in the Royal collections. (70) *The Departure of the Italian Comedians in* 1697. (71) *La Troupe Italienne.* This picture is now in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace; it is described in an old catalogue of 1789 as "one of Watteau's finest designs." (72) *The Italian troup "en vacances"*—a composition of fifteen figures.[1] (73) *The Doctor*—of the Italian comedy, represented in a background of landscape. (74) *La Tourilère.* (75) "*Arlequin, Pierrot et Scapin: En dansant ont l'âme ravie.*" The picture is in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace. (76) "*Belle, n'écoutez rien, Arlequin est un trâitre.*" (77) "*Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle.*" These are two scenes of Italian comedy. (78) "*Coquettes qui pour voir galans au rendez-vous;*" (79) *Comédiens comiques;* (80) *Le Rendéz-vous comique.* Gersaint mentions *La Sérénade Italienne,* representing six figures in a garden, engraved by

[1] A copy of verses quoted in the 'Figures Françoises et Comiques' illustrates contemporary criticism of these Italian pieces. (The orthography is original.)

"Les habits son Italiens
Les air françois, et je parie
Que dans ces vray comédiens
Git une aimable tronperie;
Et qu' Italiens et françois
Riant de lhumaine folie
Ils se moquent tout à la fois
De la france et de litalie."

Scotin, "which passed at a high price from M. Titon du Tillet, to M. de Julienne, and successively through the galleries of M. M. de Boisset, de Brun, and M. X. . . x. . . x."

Of the theatrical pieces not engraved is the *Gilles* of the Lacaze collection, at the Louvre, a masterpiece, of which there is a very good etching in the 'Gazette des Beaux Arts' of 1860 (*See the Illustration*). M. Hédouin[1] tells a curious story of this picture, which remained unsold, in the hands of a dealer named Meuniez, for years, with the inscription scratched in chalk upon it,

"Que Pierrot serait content
S'il avait l'art de vous plaire."

It is a remarkable picture. M. Bürger says of this picture, which was exhibited by M. de Cypierre in 1860 :—

"Ah! here is Pierrot in all his beauty, Pierrot in all his *taille*, planted straight and stiff as a post, with his two arms swinging against his sides! Pierrot full face, quite at home in his floating white costume, his malicious and smiling head framed into an aureole by his broad-brimmed hat! It is said that Watteau never painted another life-size figure; it is a pity, for he paints them as well as Rubens or Veronese. . . . It is not easy to paint a white figure in the open air. The whites of Gilles's costume are wonderful. . . . The breadth and solidity of the execution are also surprising in this painting, the proportions of which are not those habitually chosen by the master. All painters of *figurines* are generally lost when they attempt life-size figures: Metsu, Berchem, Du Jardin, and many others of the Dutch masters, for example. On the contrary, the *brosseurs* of large compositions are admirable when they amuse themselves with little personages: Frans Hals, for instance, in his portraits of the size of Terburgh. The incomparable sculptor Benvenuto Cellini is *only ordinary* in his gigantic statue of Perseus, whilst Michel Angelo would have done justice to the engraving of a vase or a gem. Poussin, accustomed to small figures, is not so good in his *François Xavier* as he is in his *Shepherds in Arcadia*. It is the sign of a thorough artist to be able to work well on any scale. Chardin had this merit as well as Watteau."

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[1] Hédouin, Pierre, Mosaiques, Peintres, &c., à partir du xme siècle, &c. Valenciennes, 1856.

L'INDIFFERENT.

CHARACTER FIGURES (81). *L'Amante inquiète;* on wood, originally in the collection of the Abbé Haranger, with a pendant of a *Mezzetin.*

(82) *La Fileuse* represents a peasant girl spinning.

(83) *La Finette;* (84) *L'Indifferent;* on wood. (*See the Illustrations.*) These two pictures are in the Lacaze Gallery of the Louvre. They were at one time the property of Madame de Pompadour, and were exhibited in 1860 by M. Lacaze. M. Bürger points them out as masterpieces for "qualité et pureté," and describes them as follows :—

> "The *Indifferent* is the counterpart of the *Gilles;* standing upright and full face, but with his arms spread out horizontally *en balancier,* as if he was making a pirouette ; and the whole figure is not twenty centimetres high. 'Oh, le gentil danseur!' in his little pink *crispin* lined with pale blue, on a waistcoat of blue *enverduré,* with breeches of the same, and pink silk stockings. The hat is in the same fine greens as the costume, which thus plays upon two tones of extreme delicacy. On the left is a background of trees, always between the green and the blue ; on the right a background of a setting sun in silvery pinks, which answer to the little cloak and the pink silk stockings. Is it not singular to see the foliage and the sky painted with the same *pâte* that glistens on the costume? The whole charm lies in these gradations (*nuances brisées*)—broken up, indescribable—'qui se penètrent mutuellement, se reflètent, s'accordent,' and produce a harmony which is very simple ; in some sort monochrome, but extremely *distinguée* and rare. The same phenomenon may be seen in the *Finette,* perhaps to a more intense degree. The lady is seated almost with her back towards us, but her head turned so as to show a three-quarters profile. In her left hand she holds a mandolin, of which we can only see the handle. Her long-trained robe is of a pearl grey, with pink and silver reflections, of the same tone as the sky, where the sun is setting, and as the landscape of fantastic forms.
>
> "Watteau is one of those who paint *the colours of the air, and not the colours of objects,* and therefore their colour—the light—is beyond description, like some pictures of Rembrandt and Velasquez in which it is impossible to point out the dominant colour."

(85) *La Marmotte*, on wood; now in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. (86) *Mezetin*, a subject often repeated by Watteau. De Goncourt mentions three examples, of which one is in the Hermitage. (87) *La Polonnaise*, representing a young woman in Oriental costume. (88) *La Rèveuse*, a lady in Turkish dress. (89) *La Sultane*. Almost the same subject; the lady holds a mask in her hand, and is smiling. (90) *La Villageoise;* described as a girl crossing a brook. (91) *Le Petit Sabotier Boudet*. M. Goncourt mentions others as doubtful.

DOMESTIC SCENES. *L'occupation selon l'age*, in Mr. Eames's collection. (93) *Le chat malade*. (94) *La Toilette du Matin*. (95) *L'Enseigne*, M. de Gersaint's sign-board, described on p. 50. (96) *Le Bain*. (98) *L'Accordée de Village*, described as

The Marriage; No. 69 in the descriptive catalogue of M. Noel Desenfans (1801) of the exhibition of his purchases for the King of Poland, at No. 3, Berners Street, in 1802.

> "In a fine landscape executed quite in the manner of the Venetian artists, Watteau offers here a composition of fifty-six figures in varied attitudes, and all painted with astonishing spirit. Towards the centre of the picture a large piece of red drapery, upon which hangs a crown of flowers, is suspended between two trees, behind the young bride, who is seated at a round table, with her lover by her side. The notary is also occupied in drawing up the contract, and on the right, as well as on the left, their friends are diverting themselves, some sitting on the grass, and others dancing to the sound of a viol and bagpipe.
>
> "Wat'eau has painted himself in a corner of the picture with *his children and his friend Rysbrack*.

I have failed to find in any other biography or catalogue any mention of Watteau's *children*, or a possible mother to them.

(99) *Les Agrémens de l'Este*, formerly called *La Moisson*. (100) The same title, presenting "the interior of a park, with large trees, a lady in a swing, and ten other figures looking on." (101) *L'amant repoussé*. The description of this picture

FINETTE.

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resembles that of the *Fête Champêtre* of the Dulwich Gallery. (102) *L'amour paisible*, painted for Dr. Mead, and again, (103) *L'amour paisible*—was exhibited in 1860 under the title *Le Repos dans la Campagne*, and sold at the Duc de Morny's sale, in 1865, as the *Recréation Champêtre*. It represents half-a-dozen miniature figures seated in the centre of a landscape broken by mountains.

> "By what fatality has this marvellous gem been *dénaturé*, and so cruelly treated, that it has had to be re-executed in all its sculptures, and the heads, the feet, and the hands in it to be repainted, so that all the delicate perfection of their original state is lost? Alas! there is no jeweller skilful enough to restore a Watteau gem."

(105, 106) *Amusements Champêtres*. Goncourt gives two pieces under this title: one a composition of fourteen figures, with a man playing the flute at the foot of a statue of Pan; the other containing twenty-two figures, including three in a boat. The latter is in the collection of Sir Richard Wallace, and appeared in the Manchester Exhibition.

[1] (113) *Le Bosquet de Bacchus*, is supposed to be a picture described by Waagen, in the possession of Lord Overstone.

(116) *The Champs Elysées*, of which an engraving was published in London in 1782 "from an original picture in the possession of M. A. Maskin."

(117) *Les Charmes de la vie* is in the collection of Sir R. Wallace, under the wrong title of *Concert Champêtre*. It represents the ancient Champs Elyseés, taken from the balcony of the Tuileries.

(118) *La Colation* is in the Suermondt collection. It is mentioned by M. Bürger ('Gaz. des Beaux Arts,' 1869).

(119) *Le Concert Champêtre*, formerly in the possession of

[1] I have passed over: (107) *Les Amusements Italiens*; (108) *L'Assemblee Galante*; (109) *L'Avanturière*; (111, 112) *Bals Champêtres*; (114) *La Boudeuse*; (120) *Le Conteur*; (129) *L'Emploi du bel age*; (130) *L'Enchanteur*; (131) *Entretiens Amoureux*, and other less important works.

M. Bougi, who is represented playing the violoncello. (122) *La contre danse* is described by Waagen in the collection of Mr. Mildmay. (123) *La Conversation*, is the picture mentioned on p. 47, representing the amusements of the family of M. de Julienne. It departs from the conventional costumes of Watteau's work, and is a faithful representation of a scene of real life.

(124) *Les deux cousines*—may be the portrait of two children mentioned on p. 56. (126) *Le danseur aux castagnettes*—is supposed to be at the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg under the title of *Amusement Champêtre*. It represents seven figures of men and women seated in a circle looking on at a young man who is dancing. (127) *La diseuse d'Aventure*, was once called *la Bohémienne*, and was sold in London in February, 1765, under the title of *A Gipsy telling Fortunes*. (128) is the celebrated *Embarquement pour Cythère*, described on p. 33.

(134) *La Famille*—sold at M. de Morny's sale, in 1865, as the *Lady with the Fan*. M. Bürger says of this picture—

> "What a fine Veronese tint is the yellow silk dress of the lady; how boldly the head is drawn and modelled in its extreme refinement! We recognize one of Watteau's favourite models—his friend, the wife of his friend M. de Julienne. It is the same type as the superb *Naiad*, a half-length figure from the nude, the only life-size picture from the nude that Watteau ever painted."

I do not find any mention of this Naiad (under that name) in M. de Goncourt's catalogue. M. Bürger, writing in 1860, says it was the property of M. Barroilhet.

(135) *Fêtes Venitiennes*. This important picture, containing eighteen figures in a landscape, was originally bought by M. de Julienne. The history of its depreciation under the reaction is amusing. At M. de Julienne's sale, in 1767, it was sold for 2615 livres, or about 13,000 francs; at the sale of Randon de Boisset, 1777, it brought 3000 livres, or 15,000 francs; while

as No. 50 at the Vente Clos, in 1812, it was sold for 400 francs. It was engraved by Laurent Cars.

[1] (142) *Les Jaloux*, from the cabinet of M. de Julienne. Mariette says this was the picture upon which Watteau was admitted to the Academy. (144) *Leçon d'amour* is in the palace of Berlin.

(145) *L'heureux Loisir*—is described by Goncourt as a composition in which the *fête galante* of Watteau takes its first departure from the ordinary contemporary pastoral pieces. (148) *La Mariée de Village* is in a ruined condition in the royal palace of Sans Souci at Potsdam, having suffered from a long exposure to the sun. (150) *La partie quarrée*—represented on p. 35. (152) *La Perspective*—with a view of M. de Crozat's garden at Montmorency.

(155) *Les Plaisirs du Bal.* This is the celebrated picture in Dulwich College under the title of *Le Bal Champêtre.* It contains ninety-seven figures, and has been repeatedly imitated by Pater. One of these imitations was exhibited at Paris in 1860 by the Duc de Morny as *La Danse Venitienne* by Watteau. M. Bürger points out the characteristics which prove it to be a Pater :—

> "The character of the drawing *peu volontaire*, the touch light and feeble, the colour superficial, all is characteristic of him (Pater); in copying his master he has even changed the types of the heads, turned up the noses, and rounded the cheeks in his own style."

The following is the description of this picture in the catalogue of the Dulwich College Gallery :—

> "The spectator looks out from the back of an alcove or arcade over a garden, with many birch trees and a fountain. The style of the architecture is rich renaissance, alternate courses of white and grey stone, figures, vases, and shells. A flight of steps leads down to a

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[1] (136) *La Game d'Amour;* (137) *Harlequin Jaloux;* (138) *L'Hiver;* (139) *L'Ile enchantée* (described in a quotation on p. 24); (140, 141) *L'ile de Cythère;* (143) *Le Galand Jardinier;* (146) *Le Lorgneur;* (147) *La Lorgneuse,* described as coloured like a Titian; (149) *La Musette;* (151) *Le Passe temps;* (153) *Pierrot Content;* (154) *Le Plaisir Pastoral.*

garden. On a black and white marble tiled floor a lady and gentleman dance a *minuet de la cour*. . . . On the left, a group of ladies looking on, some sitting on the ground, others standing. On the right, gentlemen and ladies converse and flirt, and drink wine. Behind them are more company and the musicians. On the same side, between two figure-carved pilasters, is a huge heap of plate on a buffet piled with fruit and refreshment. A solitary lap-dog is in the foreground. On the same side a glimpse of distant architecture is seen through the gardens and trees."

"In this picture," says Hazlitt, "we see Louis XIV. himself dancing, looking so like an old beau, his face flushed and puckered up with gay anxiety, but then the satin of his slashed doublet is made of the softest leaves of the water-lily; zephyr plays wanton with the curls of his wig."

M. de Goncourt mentions two other examples of this subject attributed to Watteau, of which, in 1862, he says one was at Blenheim,[1] and the other at Wroseton Abbey. A copy by Pater existing at S. Petersburg is mentioned by Dussieux.

Fête Champêtre, described in the catalogue of the Dulwich Gallery as follows: "A glade in a green wood looks out over a fantastic country of wood and water, and contains the figure groups. Two ladies sit on the ground in the centre of the picture; they wear sacques. A gentleman is behind them in attendance, with his hand on the arm of the nearest one. In the foreground a lady pushes away a cavalier, who is attempting to put his arm round her waist," &c.

This picture is not mentioned in the Desenfans catalogue of 1801, nor (under the above name) by Goncourt.[2] In the last

[1] In the Guide-book published in 1860, this picture is mentioned in the "Grand Cabinet," the painter's name being mis-spelt *Wooteau*.

[2] (156) *La Promenade;* (157) *Promenade sur les Ramparts;* (158) *La Proposition Embarassante;* (159) *Le Qu'en dira-t-on;* (161) *Récreation musicale;* (163) *Le Rendezvous Champêtre;* (165) *La Sérénade Italienne,* (174) *Heureux Age! age d'or, ou sans inquiétude!* (178) *Sous un habit de Mezzetin* (portrait of Sirois playing the guitar in the midst of his family); (179) *Voulez vous triompher des Belles?* (180—183) *The Seasons*, and other unimportant works, I have passed by.

PERFECT HARMONY.

edition of the Dulwich Catalogue, it is described as the *Repast in the Wood.*

(160) *Recreation Italienne*—now at Sans Souci. (162) *Le Rendezvous*, in the possession of M. A. Sichel. The painting has been a little rubbed and worn away, but is described as: "franche peinture du joli faire cristallisé du maitre."

(164) *Le Rendezvous de Chasse*—in the collection of Sir Richard Wallace. M. Bürger describes as follows:—

> "This is a large composition, six feet by four, and very rich, containing a dozen figures, some horses, dogs, and dead game, lofty trees, and a Rubens sky. It represents a forest clearing opening broadly to the horizon, and exactly in the centre two young couples are seated: one of the women in rose-colours, a half face turned to the right; the other, in pale blue, turns her back to the spectator. . . . On the second plan of the clearing two other couples are losing themselves in the intricacies of the wood. . . . The great forest fills the right corner, but in front of the trees, in a soft half shadow, is a principal group; they are, for the moment, three: a young woman in yellow, just arriving on a dappled grey horse, and two gentlemen assisting her to dismount. Two other horses are tethered close by; one of these, a chesnut, not happily drawn nor even coloured, is the weak point of the picture. Among the bushes on the left is a young man with a gun, a dead hare, and some birds hanging up among the branches. This hare is wonderful, and worthy of Chardin or Jan Fyt. On the same side there are five sporting dogs, and some more men with guns."

(166) *La signature du contrat de la noce de village*, is mentioned on page 18. (167) *La Surprise*, painted for M. Henin, is described by Mariette as one of the finest of Watteau's works.

(175) *Iris, c'est de bonne heure avoir l'air à la danse*, is in the old palace at Berlin. (177) *Pour nous prouver que cette belle. Trouve l'hymen un nœud fort doux*, is the title of a picture in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace.

The first specimen of the LANDSCAPES AND RUSTIC SUBJECTS is (184) *La vraie gaieté*, mentioned on p. 16. This is followed by (185) *La Danse Champestre*; (186) *Collation Champestre*—a picture of the early times of Watteau.

(189) *L'Indiscret* (M. Bürger says it has another name of *L'amour badin*), exhibited at the collection of French masters in 1860, belongs to Sir Richard Wallace.

> Here we have Harlequin and his good friend Columbine. They are seated apart from their comrades of the troupe, who are playing music. Columbine has a dress – the loveliest in the world—of saffron-coloured tone, of a "high fantasie." The motley Harlequin should be fond of colour, and it is not surprising that he should make his court to a pretty girl so happily adorned.

L'heureuse Chute.

> The fourth picture by Watteau in the Lacaze collection is called *L'heureuse Chute*—"Soit!" says M. Bürger. This pretty blondine "mi-renversée" has obviously tripped over a twig, and her friend has helped her a little with her falling. But she seems to be trying to get up again, and her little left hand on the grass is nervously clenched. We have a back view, and her swan-like neck (when we are with Watteau we must return now and then to the old similes of the "langue Pompadour")—her swan-like neck rises from a corset of pale lilac. The young man, stooping towards her, shows a front view, and their two heads, close together, stand out against an azure blue sky of a tone "un peu vif." This background seems to have lost some of its original glazings, which ought to soften the transition from the blues of the sky to the vermilion that is shining from the young man's face.

A curious anecdote is related by M. de Goncourt of the discovery of the now celebrated Watteau, called *The Village Festival.* It represents, "on the right a table laid out for a repast, Turks, Harlequins, and richly-costumed figures dancing in the foreground, and on the left a chariot with four white horses." M. Carrier discovered this picture, thrown away on the ground of a smith's workshop, and acquired it for 10 francs, and presented it to M. Saint, of whom he was a pupil. At M. Saint's death it was sold for 1140 francs, and subsequently brought to London, and was added to the collection of Mr. Baring, who has refused an offer of £2000 for it.

M. de Goncourt gives a catalogue of about a hundred and fifty

Arabesques and Decorative Designs invented by Watteau, which have been perpetuated by engravings; but points out that a large number of these are merely reproductions of his inventions given in rapid sketches, and generally very cleverly executed. Among the most important of those painted by Watteau are the Chinese figures painted upon the wainscotting of the "Cabinet du Roy" in the Château de la Muette, of which some were engraved by Boucher.

> "It must not be supposed that the 'Chinoiseries' of La Muette were pure imagination. If Watteau has put the stamp of his own poetic invention on this decoration, as he did on all the objects of real life that he touched, the master—will it be credited?—prepared himself for these exotic representations by a serious course of study of Chinese objects and humanity. A curious instance of this is given in the *Albertina* collection at Vienna. This is a large drawing, a large study in black lead of a Chinaman, typical in the almost photographic rendering of his costume, his peculiar shoes, finally in all the peculiarities of a native of the Celestial Empire; and even his name is preserved on a block of stone: F. Sao."

But the names of all the originals are equally preserved in the catalogue, and include doctors, gardeners, eunuchs, male and female bonzes, mandarins, Buddhist monks and nuns, gods and goddesses, soldiers, men, women, and children.

Watteau acquired from Gillot a liking for the representation of apes, and M. de Goncourt says—

> "The comic and gambolling animals appear in all corners of his arabesques, and sometimes even in his more serious pictures, mingling in the sports of mythological infants. A picture reputed an undoubted Watteau was sold at Dreux about 1862, representing an orgie of apes, collected round a broken barrel. It was bought by Basset for 1700 francs, in a very curious frame of bamboo, with the figure of a Chinaman seated in the centre. The proximity of Dreux to Madame de Pompadour's château of Crécy suggests that this picture was a fragment of an entire decoration from her château."

But the most remarkable examples of his work in this direction

GILLES.

are the decorations of the two saloons in the château at Chantilly, called *La Grande* and *La Petite Singerie.* M. de Goncourt finds in these arabesques

> "The characteristics of those of Watteau's creation: his light style of ornament, delicately traced with the very point of a pen; his *rain* of little curiosities; his manner of assembling and grasping the attributes of War or Pastoral life; his 'lambrequins,' his cameos, his arbours of foliage and fruits, his trellised architecture, his terminals with the bone-shaped pedestals, his vases in the shape of teetotums, his wreaths of may suspended in the sky. All these panels have in the upper parts the delicate confusion of gauzy textures of his engraved arabesques; and in the lower the little painted tail-piece which the master habitually throws into his decorative compositions, just as a designer of vignettes throws in a tail-piece at the end of a chapter in a book. And the signature of Watteau looks out silently from among the incessantly recurring ornaments, the rose work, the nimbus of butterfly wings, the '*déchiquetures aux nuances assoupies des papillons de la nuit.*'"

His description of the great *singerie* frescoes deserves reproducing *in extenso*, but is too long for our purpose. They are extant engraved, and should be carefully studied by the students of Watteau, and by those of decorative art in general.

M. Léon Dumont refutes the suggestion that these *singeries* are a satire upon the corrupt morals of the times, or an allusion to the loves of Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour, as the cicerone of the palace is in the habit of explaining to visitors. Watteau died in 1721, and Madame de Pompadour was born in 1722. He describes the designs:—

> "There are apes dancing, riding, swinging, carrying flags, painting, playing music, bathing, and dressing; but nothing is caricatured. Watteau has only sought effect in graceful, piquant, and ingeniously-chosen posing. . . But we must not attach too much importance to this work; in the richness of its detail we can appreciate the fertility of the artist's imagination, but it was impossible for him to give scope to his best qualities in these isolated figures detached upon a white ground; all effects of chiaroscuro and light were absolutely interdicted."

A collection of ornamental designs by Watteau was published about 1843, in 10 parts, by J. Weale and Akerman, under the patronage of the "Commission for the advancement of Scotch manufactures."

M. de Goncourt observes that Pater has the privilege of being frequently mistaken for his master. "In this way Madame de Graffigny, in her description of a room in Voltaire's house at Circy, says that all the small panels are filled with Watteau's pictures; and mentions *le Baiser donné* and *le Baiser rendu*, which are compositions of Pater. She also attributes to Watteau five panels, which she calls *The Five Senses*, and *Brother Philippe's Geese*, which is a panel from the brush of Lancret.

M. Léon Dumont mentions four *Dessus de Porte* that he was examining in the Petit Trianon, where he was studying eighteenth century art.

> "The keeper hastened to inform me that they were the work of Watteau. I protest;—I maintain that these pictures are obviously by Pater. 'It is true,' replied my candid friend, 'but we are accustomed to call them Watteaus, because there are enough Paters in the next room.' For a certain class of visitors this would be a sufficient reason. The name of Watteau has become associated with scenes of merriment and frivolity. . . . If a picture is only 'galamment composé,' it is unscrupulously attributed to him."

Watteau's pieces are dispersed through the world, and until the acquisition of the Lacaze bequest, the Louvre contained only the *Embarquement de Cythère*. At Berlin there is a large collection of his smaller pieces well worthy of study—collected by Frederick the Great, who was a great admirer of Watteau; and the Dresden gallery possesses two fine specimens of his style. Munich also has a fine example, *Ladies and Gentlemen in a Park;* and the Belvedere at Vienna, a *Lute-player*. At Cassel there are a Pierrot and Gilles composition; and a garden landscape with figures; and many other galleries and private collections in Germany boast of the possession of one or more examples of Watteau; but it is observed that the

authenticity of the works is doubtful. They are recapitulated in a work called the *Salon des Tableaux*, published by G. Parthey, Berlin, in 1864, and many by M. Dussieux. At Seville there are four *Fêtes Champêtres*, and at St. Petersburg the *Lute-player* and a number of other fine examples.

But it is in England that the master is most fully represented. The Loan Exhibition of Sir Richard Wallace's collections, at Bethnal Green in 1872, afforded the English public an opportunity of studying a great variety of his best work. Among the finest specimens then exhibited was an *Amusements Champêtres* from the collection of Cardinal Fesch, a more elaborate work than that mentioned under No. 104 above, remarkable for its breadth and spaciousness, and worthy of study as a fine specimen of Watteau's landscapes. A study called the *Toilet* exhibited in the same collection has been described by M. Burty as one of the brightest and most powerful paintings he has ever seen. Buckingham Palace possesses the pictures painted for King George during Watteau's residence in London. They are two *Fêtes Champêtres; Bourceaugnac* surrounded by his wives and children; and *Harlequin* and *Pierrot*, a composition of ten figures. At Blenheim there are the *Plaisirs du Bal*, the *Troupe Italienne*, and three minor compositions. In the Duke of Sutherland's collection at Stafford House, half a dozen representative *Amusements Champêtres* of various kinds. Lord Northbrook has a famous white *Pierrot*—pronounced by Waagen for "vivacity in the heads, clearness and warmth of colouring, and carefulness of execution; one of the most remarkable works of the master"—and a landscape, and two smaller pictures less imposing, but perhaps of equal importance in quality of colouring. Lord Dudley, two *Pastorales Galantes*. Mr. Holford, "a very attractive party of ladies and gentlemen in the open air." Miss Rogers, two small pastorales of the most remarkable transparency of colour. Mr. Tulloch, a *Fête Champêtre*—there is something wrong with the colouring, which is heavy and dark.

Mr. Bredel, a *Danse Champêtre*—a fine specimen of great warmth and transparency of colour, and of singular carefulness of execution. The late Mr. Wynn Ellis had two delicately-executed pictures, with numerous figures. The Marquis of Lansdown at Bowood, "two charming little pictures in his well-known style." Mr. Labouchere, some very pretty pictures, including some representing children. Lord Northwick, at Thirlestane House near Cheltenham, had a hunting party at luncheon—"spirited and delicate." Mr. Andrew James has (No. 92) *L'Occupation selon l'age;* a domestic subject, altogether differing from those generally chosen by Watteau. Waagen describes it as "a peep into a happy and simple *ménage.* The grandmother is seated at a spindle; the wife—her daughter apparently—is sewing a dress; a great girl is holding a pretty kitten on her arm, at which a little dog is barking; while a little boy lies reposing in great comfort. In this unusual subject Watteau appears to great advantage. The general effect is pleasingly domestic; the heads are very animated, the keeping excellent, and the sketchy treatment is very clever." There are two smaller pictures, the colouring of which is remarkable for power and transparency. But the great interest of this collection to the student of Watteau lies in the remarkable collection of sketches and drawings that it contains; including a large number of studies from nature for his pictures. The whole have been published in one of the most interesting works as representative of Watteau's genius that exists. The collection is only second to that in the British Museum. It is remarkable what a number of the drawings came from the sale of the effects of Sir Thomas Lawrence.

Mr. Morrison's collection at Basildon Park, contains a landscape with figures, which Waagen describes as "one of the master's *gaudy* works," and de Goncourt (after him) as "*couleur argentine.*" The Duke of Devonshire has some important specimens. There are also several at the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. Mr. Henry G. Bohn, of North End House,

Twickenham, possesses fourteen pictures (including five *Fêtes Champêtres*), several of which have been engraved in "Watteau's Works."

The above list does not pretend to approach exhaustion of the subject. It serves to show how highly Watteau has been appreciated by English collectors, and how judiciously these have selected and retained in this country the finest specimens of his work.

Wilkie wrote in his journal at Dresden: "The Watteaus, of which there is one in the gallery, and one I saw to-day, are in quality too light and feeble, but elegant and gay in the extreme. If it be objected that his style is affected; that, the subjects themselves require. His style stands alone in the art, as the essence of fashion, frivolity and elegance; the converse of boorishness; rendered in an artist-like and picturesque manner."

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his 'Notes on Dufresnoy,' says: "We may recommend here an attention to the works of Watteau, for excellence in the florid style of colouring" ('Works,' vol. iii. p. 156).

B. R. Haydon also writes: "The only man (of the French school) who coloured with exquisite feeling, was Watteau; whose touch and delicacy of tint may be studied with great profit by any artist" ('Enc. Britt.' Article 'Painting').

Finally, I conclude this short notice with a quotation from M. Dussieux (*Les Artistes Français à l'Etranger*). Of a dozen lines into which he compresses his notice of the life and works of Watteau, three are devoted to the remark that—"It is obvious that our great artist, by his imagination, his originality, his *humour*, and his colour, exercised a great influence on the modern English School." And it is from this point of view that his history and the quality of his work are deserving of more attentive study than has yet been generally given by those who have learned to describe Watteau only as the *peintre des fêtes galantes.*

CHRONOLOGY OF WATTEAU'S LIFE.

	A.D.
Born at Valenciennes	1684
Baptized in the Church of S. Jacques, Oct. 10	1684
Became a Pupil of Jacques Gérin	1698
Went to Paris and Painted Scenes for the Opera	1702
Became a Pupil of Claude Gillot	1703
Assisted Audran to Paint the Decorations of the Luxembourg	1708
Gained a Prize at the Academy	1709
Visited Valenciennes	1709
Made an Academician	1717
Visited London for about a Year	1719
Went to Live in the House of M. Lefebvre at Nogent	1721
Died there, Aged 37, July 18	1721

APPENDIX.

TRANSLATION OF THE LETTERS ON PAGES 43–44.

To M. Gersaint, merchant, on the Pont Notre Dame, from Watteau.

Saturday.

Friend Gersaint,

Yes, as you wish it, I will come to-morrow and dine at your house with Antoine de la Roque. I intend going to hear mass at S. Germain de l'Auxerrois; and I shall certainly be with you at noon, for I shall only have one visit to make first, to friend Molinet, who has been suffering for a fortnight from a slight attack of fever.

Meantime, your friend,

A. Watteau.

To Monsieur de Julienne, from Watteau, by express.

Paris, the 3rd of May.

Sir!

I return you the large first volume of the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, and beg you at the same time to accept my sincere thanks. As to the manuscript letters of P. Rubens, I shall still keep them before me if that is not too disagreeable to you, as I have not yet come to the end of them!! A pain in the left side of the head has not allowed me to sleep since Tuesday, and Mariotti wants me to take a purge to-morrow, he says that the great heat will assist him. You will make me happy beyond my desires if you pay me a visit here on Sunday. I will show you some trifles, such as the landscapes from Nogent, which are sufficiently valuable to you for the reason that I thought out the plan of them in the presence of Madame de Julienne, whose hands I most respectfully kiss. I am not doing all that I wish, because the grey stone ("pierre gris") and the blood stone ("pierre sanguine") are very hard at present, and I cannot get others.

A. Watteau.

To Monsieur de Julienne from W.

Paris, the 3rd September.

Sir!

By Marin, who has brought me the venison that you were pleased to send me this morning, I send you the canvas on which I have painted the heads of the boar and of the black fox, and you can forward them to M. de Losmesnil, for I have done with them for the moment. I cannot conceal from myself that this large canvas pleases me, and I expect from it some return of satisfaction on your part and on that of Madame de Julienne, who is as infinitely fond of subjects of the chase as myself. It was necessary for Gersaint to send me the worthy La Serre to enlarge the canvas on the right hand, where I have added some horses under the trees, for I was embarrassed there since I have made the additions decided upon. I hope to take up that part of the picture on Monday afternoons; I am engaged all the morning in chalk sketches.

I beg you not to forget me to Madame de Julienne, whose hands I kiss.

A. Watteau.

To Monsieur de Julienne.

Monsieur!

Monsieur the Abbé de Noirterre has been pleased to send me that canvas of P. Rubens on which there are two angel heads, and under them on the cloud the figure of a woman absorbed in thought. Surely there is nothing that could have rendered me happier, if I had not even been persuaded that it is from friendship for you and for your nephew that Monsieur de Noirterre deprived himself of so rare a picture as that in my favour. Since the moment I received it I have not remained at rest, and my eyes never tire of returning to the desk on which I have placed it, as it were in a shrine! It would not be easy to persuade oneself that P. Rubens ever did anything more finished than this canvas. I will beg you, sir, to convey my sincere thanks to Monsieur the Abbé de Noirterre, awaiting my own opportunity of expressing them myself. I will take the opportunity of the next Orleans post to write to him, and to send him the picture of the "Rest of the Holy Family," which I intend for him in gratitude.

Your most attached friend and servant, Sir!!

A. Watteau.

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